

COLCHESTER

Colonial Port on the Potomac

Front Cover: Tobacco Warehouse Activities: An Engraving from Tatham, An Historical and Practical Essay on the Culture and Commerce of Tobacco, 1800. The border is composed of tobacco marks which were applied with a branding iron on hogsheads to identify each planter. Reading clockwise starting at the upper left hand corner, the marks belonged to: Captain William Bronaugh, James Buckley, Dempsey Carroll, Jr., Edward Bland, Benjamin Hutchison, James Doyle, Samuel Conner, William Hardy, Jeremiah Hutchison, William Kincheloe, William King, Marcellus Littlejohn, William Triplett, James Turley, Sr., Mrs. Jean Turley, Paul Turley, Sampson Turley, James Halley, Sr., Benjamin Grayson, John Gist, Thomas Love, Daniel McCarty, William Moon, Joseph Yatman, and William Pinkstone.

Transcribed by Beth Mitchell from the Glassford & Company Records, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

COLCHESTER:

Colonial Port on the Potomac

by
Edith Moore Sprouse

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Two miles farther down once stood the colonial town of Colchester, and less is known of it now than of the streets of Perseopolis.

American Genius, 1882

INTRODUCTION

Along the rivers of Tidewater Virginia and Maryland are scores of "lost towns," founded in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to function as ports, county seats, or tobacco inspection centers. They grew, flourished, and when there was no longer a reason for their existence, declined. This phenomenon is not restricted to an earlier day, for the 1948 "Map of Suburban Washington" published by the National Geographic Society shows many villages of which there are no traces in 1972.¹

Nearly a century has passed since James Albert Clark commented upon the lack of knowledge about the town of Colchester² but his observation is still valid. It is ironic, since the celebration in October 1971 of the 2500th anniversary of Perseopolis, that much more is known of the streets of that ancient town.

Tangible remains of the thriving ports along the Potomac River and its tributaries during the eighteenth century - Dumfries, Aquia, Port Tobacco or Colchester, for example - are few. A name, a few houses, a brickbat or a shard of pottery in an overgrown field are all that survive of some communities important in the colonial period. Their history is but dimly remembered and largely undocumented. Only a few, such as Marlborough in Stafford County³ or St. Mary's City in Maryland, have been extensively researched.

Most of the ports, with the sole exception of Alexandria, have been forgotten. It is the purpose of this study to investigate one of these river towns in order to illuminate one segment of Tidewater history, when such ports played an important part in a culture founded upon tobacco. Colchester is a potentially valuable and largely undisturbed archaeological site which is unique in Fairfax County. By chronicling the rise and fall of this port on the Potomac River a better understanding may be gained of its counterparts whose names have all but passed into oblivion.

In 1974, the village of Colchester is linked to the earlier community by its orientation to the water. There is a small marina, situated at the spot where travelers on the King's Highway crossed the Occoquan by ferry. Two houses of this earlier period are still standing. The challenge of reconstructing the background of the community is compounded by the loss of certain relevant Fairfax County records. The minute books kept by the town Trustees have disappeared, their existence gleaned from an incidental reference in an early deed book.⁴

Existing records such as the town plat of 1754, in conjunction with the detailed mercantile account books of the firm of John Glassford & Company, offer much evidence of the early history of the town. Land tax records can fill in certain gaps when deed books are missing. Although there are five dwellings built in recent years

within the 25- acre townsite, most of the land is still in open space. Infrared aerial photographs reveal some 20 underground potential sites worthy of field testing and possible archaeological investigation. At a level below the plough-zone, this evidence of the early town is largely undisturbed. One of the two early houses has been owned by the same family since 1830 and portions of the structure may be from an earlier period. The other structure, in the face of all the calamities of fires, hurricanes and plagues reputed to have afflicted the town, represents a most fortunate survival of an eighteenth century tavern.

An opportunity exists in Colchester for a careful study of one small but significant port on the Potomac River, on the main Post Road from Boston to Charleston. This monograph will endeavor to recreate the life of this town, document the activities of some of its residents, and show its potential as a major site in historic archaeology.

Introduction Notes

1

Kathmoor in the Franconia area, Alpine near Annandale, Donaldson and Ragin in the Hybla Valley neighborhood south of Alexandria are but a few communities named in 1948 which are forgotten in 1974.

2

James Albert Clark, "Along the Shore of the Potomac," American Genius, supplement, (1882), p. 13. This article was in a bound collection of pamphlets catalogued under the subject title Potomac River in the New York Public Library. The author's address was given as 1113 S Street, N.W., Washington, D. C. The Library of Congress catalogue of periodicals, however, has no mention of American Genius.

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Malcolm Watkins, The Cultural History of Marlborough, Virginia: An Archeological and Historical Investigation of the Port Town for Stafford County and the Plantation of John Mercer, United States National Museum Bulletin, No. 253 (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1968).

4

Fairfax County Deed Book R-1, p. 288.

Chapter I

DEVELOPMENT OF TOWNS ON THE POTOMAC RIVER

Early Settlements

As early as 1540 the Chesapeake Bay was delineated upon a copper globe as the Bahia de Santa Maria. Spaniards seeking a passage to the Indies were in its waters later in the sixteenth century exploring a river which they called Espiritu Santo, within the territory of the chief of Axacan. On their return to Mexico the brother of the chief accompanied them. There he was greeted ceremonially by the Viceroy and sent to Spain to be presented at Court. In 1570 the Indian came back to Axacan with a party of Jesuits. The hasty notes written by Fathers Segura and Quiros before embarking on that voyage are said to be the earliest known documents relating to Virginia.¹

The mission was shortlived: surface exposure to European civilization did not prevent the Indian guide from participating in the massacre of the priests before the first winter had passed. A Spanish relief expedition under the command of Don Menendez found but one survivor. They hung eight Indians from the yardarm of their ship, took possession of the land in the name of the King, and quickly returned to Saint Augustine.

Although the similarity in word-forms led some historians to believe that Axacan might have been located along the Potomac on Aquia Creek or the Occoquan, more recent research tends to place Axacan on the York River. Despite these findings some residents along Aquia still speak of hearing the cries of the massacred victims on a quiet night.²

The first European known to have entered the river was Captain John Smith. When he explored the Chesapeake Bay in June 1608, seeking a northern outlet he ascended the Potomac, mapping it as he sailed up as far as the fall-line. His map shows a "chief's house" on the upper shore of the Occoquan River. "As far as you see the little crosses on rivers, mountains, and other places, have been discovered," reported Smith. "The rest was had by information of the Savages, and are set down according to their instruction."³ The map was so accurate that his configuration of the Potomac River, when overlaid on a modern chart, is nearly identical.

Smith's voyage to the head of tidewater helped in establishing friendly relations with the Indians, which led to a brisk trade in corn and furs. One trader, Henry Fleet, aided the first Maryland settlers in 1634 in founding the first English town on the Potomac, St. Marys City. Trading posts were set up near Indian villages on Potomac Creek in Virginia and across the river, on the banks of the Piscataway, Port Tobacco and Anacostia Rivers. Jesuits who had come to Maryland with Leonard

Calvert lost no time in establishing missions. Father Andrew White was living on Piscataway Creek (Prince Georges County, Maryland) in 1639, seeking to convert the Tayac to Christianity. The next summer he baptised the chief of the Piscataways.

On the fifth of July in a solemn manner he rec'd the sacramental waters in a little chapel which he had erected out of bark in the manner of the Indians ... the Governor was present at this ceremony, together with his secretary and many others. Nor was anything lacking in display which our means could provide. In the afternoon, the Tayac and his Queen were united in matrimony in the Christian manner; then a great holy cross was erected, in carrying which to its destined place the king, governor, secretary, etc., lent their shoulders and hands.⁴

The English soon were forced to withdraw from the upper Potomac because of Indian hostility. Quarrels among the Marylanders caused some of their number to cross the river and settle in Virginia. One was Giles Brent, member of the Council, treasurer of the colony, and in 1643 acting Governor. With him came his sister Margaret, who had acted as Governor Calvert's executor and unsuccessfully petitioned the Maryland Assembly for the unheard-of right for a vote of her own.

The Brents acquired land in Virginia by 1644 and formed the nucleus of a new settlement across the Potomac from St. Marys City. Remote from the capital at Jamestown, these new residents were governed by neither colony until Northumberland County was formed in 1648. The first Virginia land patent mentioning the "Petomeck" was issued in 1643.⁵

As late as 1651 Lord Baltimore claimed jurisdiction over the Virginia shore above Aquia Creek. This stemmed from a mistaken assumption that John Smith's map had shown the Aquia as the main branch of the river separating the two colonies. Brent, who left Maryland to avoid His Lordship's interference, must have been appalled when Lord Baltimore urged London to send settlers "to that place where Mr. Giles Brent now resides."⁶ Mr. Brent lost no time in urging the Virginia Assembly to establish their claim by forming a new county. By 1651 he had moved upriver to the Aquia Creek area and was for some years the northernmost settler on the Virginia shore of the Potomac. As new land patents were granted, his land was cited as a point of reference. Giles Brent and his sister Margaret took out land grants in the "freshes" of the river as far upstream as the present city of Alexandria at a time when their friends were still just beginning to patent lands on the Quantico and Occoquan.

Settlement up the Potomac advanced rapidly enough so that a new county, Westmoreland, was formed in 1653 and then Stafford County in 1664. On the Maryland side no new county was taken out of St. Marys until 1658, 24 years after the colony was founded. In the newly established Charles County, grants were patented in 1654 in the present Fort Washington area and in 1662 for Blue Plains (in 1974, the location of District of Columbia sewage plant) and a tract called St. Elizabeths (near Oxon Hill, Maryland).

Lands along the Occoquan and on the present Mason Neck were patented in the 1650's by speculators who lived far downstream. The first reference by name seems to be a May, 1653 grant to one Corbert Piddel, who took out 1,000 acres lying "southeast on the Potomeck River and southwest on a creek above Capt. Brent's about fifteen miles called Aquoconde." In September 1654 Richard Codsford patented 400 acres "known by the name of Sandy Point" on Mason Neck. Sandy Point is still shown on modern maps. References appear in the patent books to Doeg's Island offshore, which had eroded away by the eighteenth century. The patents mention Englishmen living as far up the river as the present Mount Vernon area in 1657.⁷

Pressures from the settlers pushing upriver eventually resulted in Indian reprisals. The Susquehannock war and Bacon's Rebellion erupted in 1675 and combined to force the white men to retreat downstream to the Aquia Creek area. The Indian hostilities culminated in a joint siege by Maryland and Virginia troops on the Indian fort on Piscataway Creek, Maryland. English forts were subsequently established at the heads of Virginia rivers. One was built on Hunting Creek but, "being made of mudd and dirt and soe of noe use or continuance,"⁸ it soon fell apart.

Another was built at "Nieapisco near Occoquan" in 1679. A storehouse of 60 x 22 feet and a small house of ten feet square for ammunition storage were authorized by the Assembly. Four Indians were to be provided for each garrison. "Because there is no neighboring Indians on the Virginia side residing near the garrison on Potomack," the legislation stated, "...four Matteoman Indians from Maryland are to be hired." Col. George Mason, great-grandfather of the builder of Gunston Hall, was ordered to provide powder and shot for the garrison and 100 yards of trading cloth to reward the Indians.⁹

The fort was located on the lower side of the Occoquan River along the Indian trail known as the Potomac Path, which developed in later years into the King's Highway. Mid-nineteenth century tradition placed the ruins of the fort at the top of the hill, overlooking the road which ascended from the ferry landing.¹⁰ In twentieth century Woodbridge, the supposed site is near the railroad bridge crossing. There an eroded gully indicates the early road.

The fort was dismantled in 1682 and replaced by a force of 20 rangers, who were to scout the upper reaches of Stafford County toward the falls of the Potomac. A boat was to be provided by Col. Mason at the Occoquan for the militia and their horses.¹¹

The Ferry Across the Occoquan

Land speculators from the lower Tidewater first acquired tracts on the Occoquan in the 1650's. Usually the Indian trail along the Potomac which linked the upper and lower parts of Stafford County was easily traversed, and most of the creeks could be easily forded, even in bad weather, by detouring a short distance upstream from the customary crossing. Should there be danger from Indians a man could get back across the streams into more densely populated territory.

The Occoquan, however, was no gentle stream. In winter its waters were treacherous and nasty, pouring through a narrow rocky gorge, tossed by biting winds. Swollen in the spring by melting snows from the Bull Run Mountains to the west, this river could form an impassable barrier for days at a time. Long after the end of the Susquehannock uprising the inhabitants above the Occoquan had occasional alarms. As late as 1704 John West would write from his plantation on Hunting Creek of his inability to attend sessions of the county court because of "...great sign of Indians and the inhabitants in great fear of them."¹²

The first official transport across the Occoquan was provided by Col. George Mason in 1684. His concern was with the militia. There was no obligation to run a ferry for the civilian population, nor did anyone expect him to do so. By 1691 there were enough settlers so that the Stafford Court could order:

For the convenience of the town or port for this county as well as the court-house it is found absolutely necessary for the inhabitants of the upper parish of this county that there should be a ferry kept over Occoquan River.

David Strahan, a lieutenant in the militia, was operating a ferry there in February 1690/1, several months before this court authorization.¹³ Martin Scarlett, a justice of the Stafford Court and surveyor of the road between Occoquan and Neabsco Creek, was another who was in charge of the ferry during its early years. Scarlett lived on the lower side of Occoquan at his Deep Hole plantation; his tombstone, dated 1695, is on the grounds of the Army Radio Station at Woodbridge.

The location chosen for the ferry crossing was determined by the topography of the land. It was situated about two miles upstream from the mouth of the Occoquan, at its narrowest point, before the steep banks on the shoreline prevented easy access to the river. The route lay from John Peake's former landing on the upper shore to the landing on the tract formerly occupied by Thomas Pearson on the other side.¹⁴ Peake had two tracts, a total of about 300 acres. The smaller of these contained the landing. From that spot a ferry operated for the next hundred years before being replaced by a bridge; around the landing a blacksmith shop, a tavern, and other facilities for travelers developed. Here the town of Colchester was established in 1753: when the ferry crossing became obsolete, the town itself declined.

Ferries in the Tidewater were essential elements of transportation. The primitive roads served primarily as connector links between interlacing waterways. When as recently as 1909 the 50 miles between Washington and Fredericksburg required seven hours travel over a corduroy road and the motorist could conclude that "Any autoist who can successfully pilot a car over the Telegraph Road ... without mishap will find descent of the steps of the east front of the Capitol to be mere child's play,"¹⁵ one can barely imagine what colonial travelers must have experienced.

Although Maryland claimed jurisdiction over the Potomac River under the terms of its charter, it did not begin officially to establish ferries until 1781. Virginia legislation relating to ferries began in 1673 and until 1784 it was assumed that the Potomac was under its control.¹⁶ An Act of 1702 established ferry rates and set forth conditions for licenses. Boats were to operate between sunrise and sunset. Ferrymen

were to be exempted from militia duties, public levies and road work. A vestige of these early privileges is part of Virginia law, for ferrymen employed at any ferry established by law are still exempt from jury duty.¹⁷

The ferry across the Occoquan was first mentioned in a 1730 Act providing for a parish vestry election but rates were not set for that specific crossing until 1736. Charges were fixed at threepence for a man and the same for a horse.¹⁸

The Establishment of Towns

"There seems no need for a waste of money in attempting to build up towns on the lower Potomac," commented a writer many years later. "The British government tried that experiment before the Revolution, and every attempt of the sort turned out to be a signal failure."¹⁹

This retrospective viewpoint was a fair judgement. Towns had never been particularly successful ventures on the Virginia rivers, although attempts had been made by the Assembly to establish ports since 1680. At that time legislation was passed setting up one town in each county, through which all tobacco exported and all goods imported should pass. Despite special inducements offered to prospective inhabitants, few towns were able to attract settlers. It was much more convenient to trade from one's own wharf. Few of the projected towns materialized, fewer still flourished. Hampton, Yorktown and Hobbs Hole (Tappahannock) owe their origins to this legislation, but most of the paper towns suffered the fate of the nameless port for Stafford County. A port town was directed to be built at Peace Point, Col. Giles Brent's former plantation on Aquia Creek. Nothing came of the move until 1691, when another directive was issued for a port town in Stafford County. This time the location, although still on land owned by the Brents, was on the upper bank of Potomac Creek (in 1974 known as Marlborough Point). The town was Marlborough. Stafford County records show that 50 acres were purchased from Giles Brent, Jr., for 13,000 lbs. of tobacco, that in November 1691 a "chief undertaker" was chosen to build the courthouse, and the surveyor "shall lay out the said town or port according to law, to the intent that all the gentlemen ... and other inhabitants may take up such lots as he or they desire."²⁰

Twenty-seven lots were sold in February 1692. Two men, one of them Capt. George Mason, Jr., received licenses to open ordinaries (taverns). Mason supervised the building of a prison 12 feet square with stocks and pillory. The courthouse, although not yet finished, was usable at this time. Impetus for the town flagged when the act for ports was suspended in 1693; not until 1705 when another act was passed for ports did much activity occur. This act not only named the town but its provisions allowed for exemptions of part of the customs duties, special privileges in regard to paying poll taxes, and partial freedom from militia duty for residents.

Like its predecessor, the Act for Ports was in force only briefly before being repealed. The English government, primarily interested in profitable tobacco crops, was not anxious to encourage self-sufficiency nor to foster any development of manufacturing in Virginia.²¹

The courthouse in Marlborough burned about 1718, destroying the main justification for the town's existence. Two years later the county seat was relocated and the few houses fell into decay. When John Mercer acquired the land in 1726 there was only one house left standing.²² Mercer developed the site as a plantation and only the name remained as a reminder of the shortlived town.

Across the Potomac River other seventeenth century towns fared somewhat better. St. Marys City, founded in 1634, was the capital of Maryland for 60 years. Actual town development did not begin until the 1660's. City charters were granted in 1668 and in 1671. By 1678 there were about 30 houses and a State House.²³ The growth of St. Marys was halted by a change of political power and by settlement patterns farther up the Chesapeake Bay. In 1695 the capital was moved to Providence (now Annapolis) and the town of St. Marys died.

Port Tobacco, the county seat of Charles County, Maryland, from 1727 to 1895, had its beginnings in the Indian village noted on Captain John Smith's map as Potapoco. During the latter part of the seventeenth century a village was laid out and called Chandlers Town; by 1729 another town plat had been superimposed over the first. A courthouse was constructed and 100 lots laid out on 60 acres of land. The town was named Charles Town but was known to its inhabitants as Portobacco. This community was an important shipping center throughout the eighteenth century. As was the case with other tobacco ports along tributaries of the Potomac River, siltation ended its usefulness as a port. This community, however, continued to serve as a market town until the court house burned in 1892 and the county seat was moved to La Plata. In recent years extensive research and planning have been underway toward redevelopment of both of these Maryland towns as historic centers.

Although they had a longer lifespan than Marlborough, the towns on the Potomac could not really flourish in an area where direct contact with European ships could be made at one's own wharf. Hugh Jones, writing in 1724, characterized the situation by concluding that "anything may be delivered to a gentleman there from London or Bristol with less trouble and care, than to one living five miles in the country in England."²⁴

A Favorable Town Site

After the 1705 Act for Ports was rescinded, town building experienced a period of inactivity that lasted for many years. During this time a combination of factors set the stage for another attempt. Until the beginning of the eighteenth century most of the land grants had been issued along the river front and the banks of its tributaries. When available waterfront land became scarce grants were taken up to the westward in the backwoods part of the Potomac watershed.

Between 1707 and 1719 patents were issued at the falls of the Occoquan and inland towards the present Manassas area. As these lands away from navigable water became settled and their fields cleared for growing tobacco, a need arose for roads along which the crop could be brought to the waterside for shipment. Another

JOHN WARNER SURVEY

Scale 1: 160,000

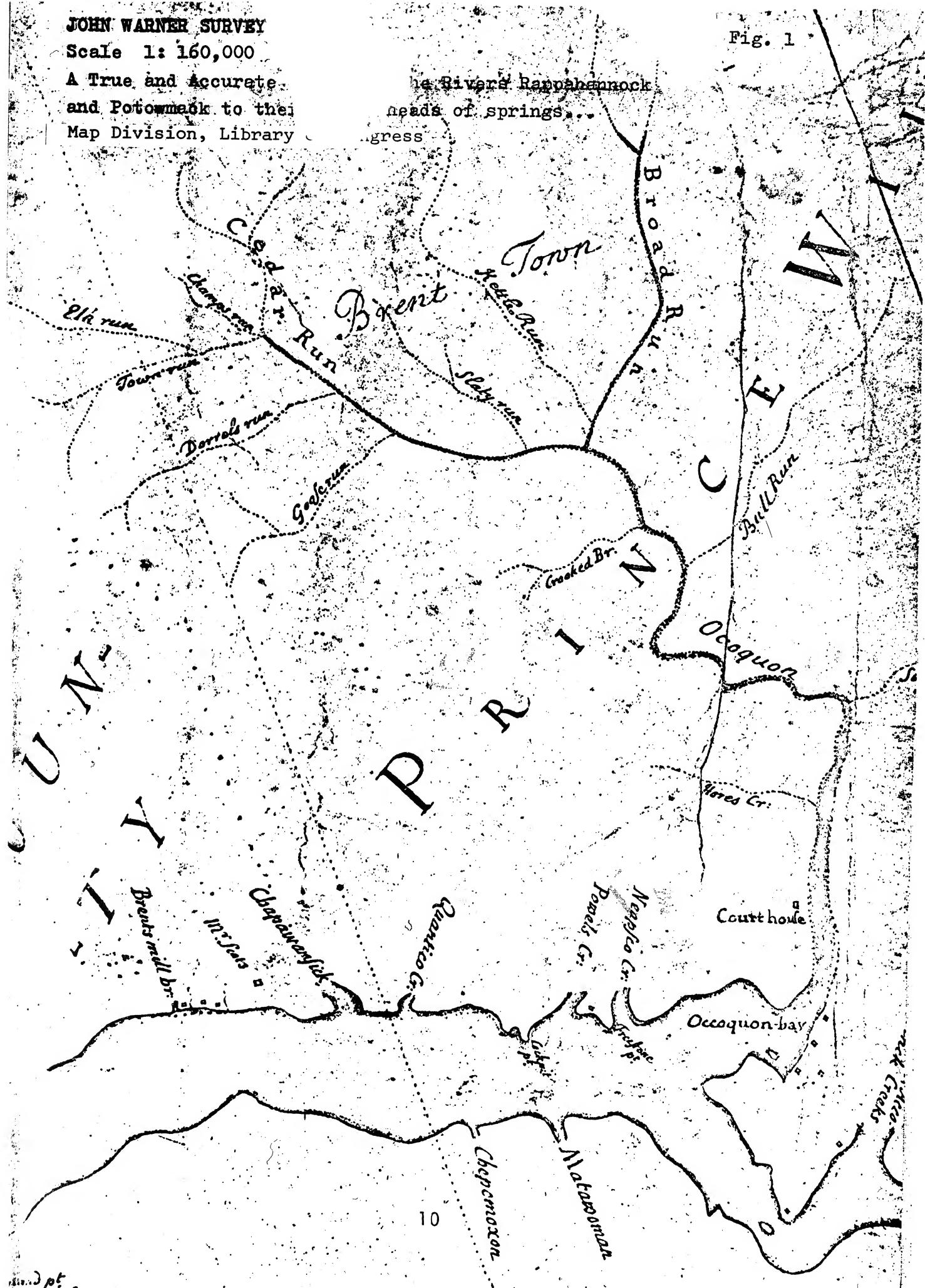
A True and Accurate
and Potowmack to the
Map Division, Library

Fig. 1

The Rivers: Rappahannock

heads of springs.

agress



necessity was some form of storage area for the tobacco while it awaited the arrival of a ship; combined with this was the need for a warehouse and inspection system to upgrade the quality of tobacco sent to Great Britain and to collect duties from the planters.

One land parcel in the back country area was Robert Carter's Frying Pan tract (near the present village of Floris in western Fairfax County), where in 1729 Carter's sons tried to mine what they believed to be an outcrop of copper. Failing to secure a water outlet near the Great Falls of the Potomac from which to ship their ore, they chose instead land on the Occoquan just below the fall line. From here a road was cleared to the copper mine. The "copper" turned out to be only a calcareous shale with a tinge of copper, and the mining venture was abandoned. But the road cut through the forest (the Ox Road) offered an outlet to tidewater which became increasingly important.

The Tobacco Act of 1730 revived a system of inspection which had been proposed earlier by Governor Spotswood. Public waterhouses were built at the heads of the tidewater streams to lessen as much as possible the overland distance from inland plantations. In 1734 one such warehouse was established at the landing on the north bank of the Occoquan.²⁵

During this same period population increase in the upper part of Stafford County resulted in a new county being formed in 1731 above Chapawamsic Creek. Eleven years later, in 1742, Fairfax County was established, with the Occoquan as its lower boundary. The courthouse for Prince William County was to have been built on the upper shore of the Occoquan, where a church stood near the ferry landing. Although the courthouse was actually built on the lower bank, there existed a developing neighborhood around the former location by 1737.

Here, then, was a location on the Potomac Path (the main road north and south) close to where the Ox Road²⁶ (the main road west to the Blue Ridge Mountains) led inland. Conditions were favorable for establishing a port town at this spot downstream from the warehouse, where the high bluffs on the upper shore of the Occoquan gave way to a gentle slope.

Chapter I Notes

1

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William Waller Hening, The Statutes at Large: Being a Collection of all the Laws of Virginia ..., (13 vols.; New York: R.&W.&G. Bartow, 1823,) II, 328, 330, 433.

10

William H. Snowden, Some Old Historic Landmarks of Virginia and Maryland (2 vols.; 5th ed.; Alexandria, Va.: G.H. Ramey & Son, 1903) II, 71.

11

Hening, Statutes, II, 498; III, 21.

12

Stafford County Deed Book Z-1, p. 248.

13

Stafford County Court Order Book, November 1961.

14

Ibid., December 4, 1692. Peake's larger tract on Giles Run was purchased in 1767 by Reverend Lee Massey and became known as "Bradley" (Fairfax County Deed Book G-1, p. 313). The Peake family had a plantation on Little Hunting Creek in the mid-eighteenth century called Gum Spring; this land and the family graveyard are partially included in Martin Luther King Park (1972). In the nineteenth century the Peakes moved to Centreville before migrating to Hannibal, Missouri. At that place they lived in a house owned by author Samuel Clemens, who mentioned the family in his autobiography.

15

"Washington to Fredericksburg in an Auto," Evening Star, (Washington), August 15, 1909.

16

"Report of Col. A.W. McDonald Relative to Boundary Lines," Virginia Senate Journal, Special Session, 1861. This summarizes Acts relating to Potomac River ferries. The Governor of Virginia sent Col. McDonald to England to search colonial documentary evidence concerning the Maryland-Virginia boundary. His maps and much of the report are missing, but a partial index exists. It was rumored that certain material was deliberately removed from McDonald's nine manuscript volumes. Virginia State Library, catalog #J87/V7/1861b.

17

Alexandria Globe, February 11, 1971, citing the current Code of Virginia. Also exempt from jury duty are those in such outmoded occupations as postriders and stage drivers.

18

Hening, Statutes, IV, 304, 532. The Act of 1702 is in III, 218.

19

Alexandria Gazette, January 26, 1871. The writer was protesting a Congressional proposal to establish a port of entry at Evansport (now Quantico) on the Potomac. Although his views were biased in favor of Alexandria, his statement about towns was valid.

20

Stafford County Court Order Book, October 8, 1691.

21

Watkins, Marlborough, pp. 7-8, has an excellent discussion of early towns in Virginia. See also Edward F. Heite, "Markets and Ports," Virginia Cavalcade, April 1966, p. 29.

22

Watkins, Marlborough, p. 14.

23

Robert L. Plavnick, St. Mary's City: A Plan for the Preservation and Development of Maryland's First Capital (St. Mary's City, Md.: St. Mary's City Commission, 1970), pp. 9, 15. A comprehensive research and preservation plan was begun in 1966.

24

Hugh Jones, The Present State of Virginia, ed. by Richard L. Morton, new ed., (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1956), p. 73.

25

Hening, Statutes, IV, 331.

26

A 1746 petition to the Fairfax County Court stated that "the main road leads from Ocquaquan ferry to Blew ridge." Virginia State Library, Accession #21681.

Figure 2.

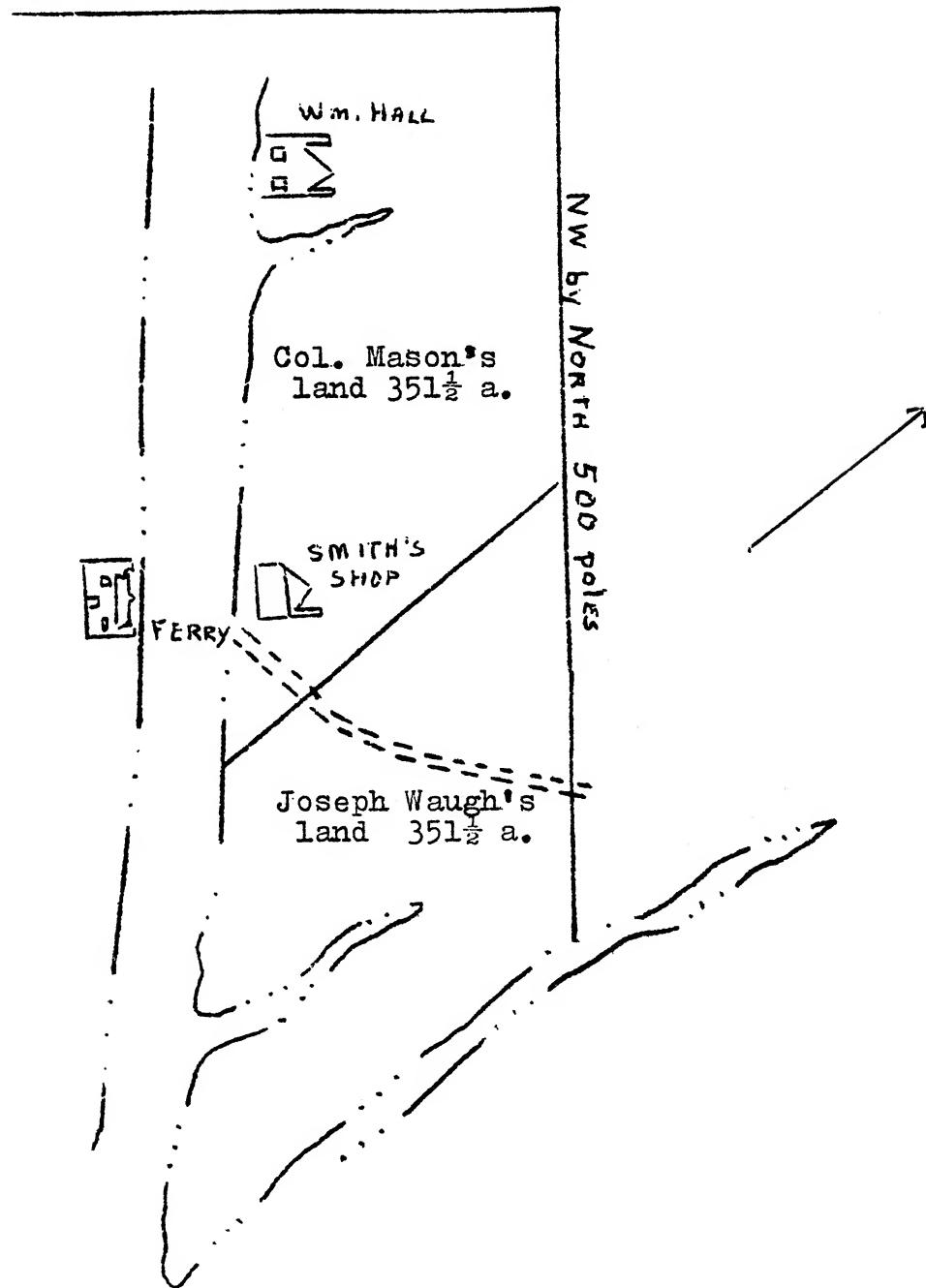
DIVISION OF BOURNE'S 1666 PATENT FOR 1000 ACRES

Actually 703 acres.

John Savage Survey August 7, 1729

Fairfax County Proceedings in Land Causes, Justice Book I, p. 22

SW by S 152 instead of 320 poles



Chapter II

THE GROWTH OF COLCHESTER

Land Ownership Before 1753

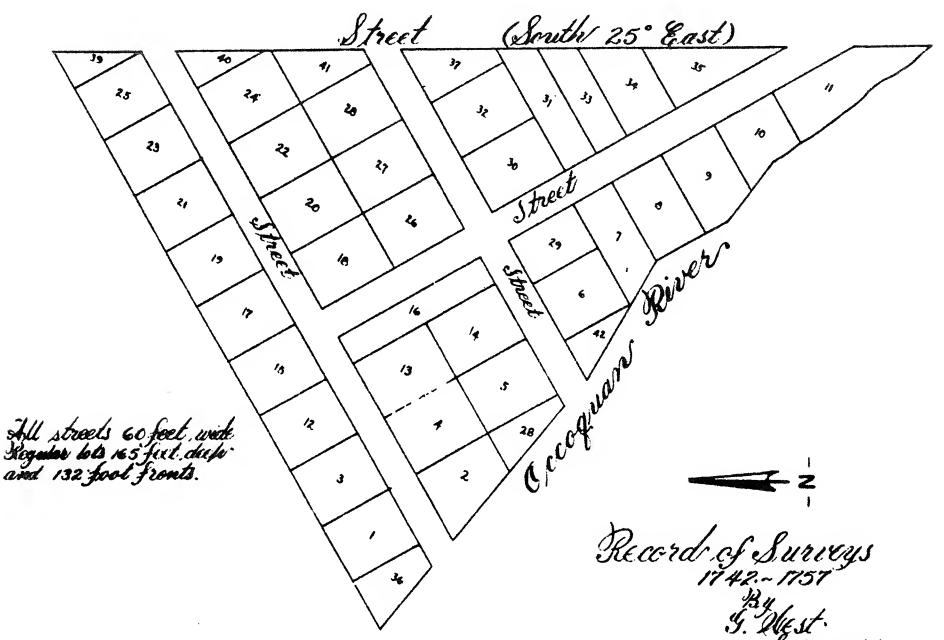
In 1729 there was a blacksmith shop at the shore of the Occoquan River and a ferry to take passengers across. In the vicinity was Occoquan Church.¹ Across the river stood a house owned by the third George Mason.

The land on which the town was later to be built had been patented on June 5, 1666 by William Bourne (Boren) of Stafford County, part of a thousand acre tract "on the northeast side of Accaquan Creek." Bourne received the land for bringing 20 settlers to Virginia.² On November 12, 1668 Bourne conveyed the tract to Thomas Baxter and William Harris. A few months later Baxter sold the upper 500 acres to Ralph Clifford, whose daughter held it until March 24, 1692. The next owner was George Luke. The lower 500 acres had passed into the hands of Joseph Waugh by 1729.³

In 1726 Elizabeth Luke sold her half of the tract to George Mason, owner of the ferry concession and the father of George Mason of Gunston Hall. When the tract was surveyed three years later and divided between Mason and Waugh, it was found to contain 703 acres rather than 1,000.⁴ Extending upstream from Giles Creek (now Massey Creek), the tract was split diagonally. Perhaps this was done in order that the ferry landing would be included within Mason's land. Because of this southern tip cutting across the road to the Occoquan ferry, a 25 acre segment was separated from the rest of the tract. This was the area where the future town of Colchester would be laid out. It is apparent that a portion of this dividing line is shown as a property boundary⁵ on the 1972 Fairfax County Property Map, running from the shoreline toward the present Furnace Road (formerly Ox Road, now county route 611).

Col. George Mason did not remain in undisputed possession of the land. Mrs. Luke changed her mind and sued him in the General Court of Virginia, ejecting the new owner; she then willed this tract to John Popiatt of Great Britain.⁶ The Mason family continued to run the ferry and must have assumed that they had a valid claim to the land. In 1735 George Mason, crossing the Potomac from his plantation in Charles County, Maryland, was drowned when his boat capsized. In the absence of a will, his property passed to his oldest son George. Many years later an attempt was made by Mason to recover the tract but he did not succeed, although Mason's right to operate the ferry was reconfirmed.⁷ This was set forth in an Act of Assembly in 1744, which stated:

A Plan of Ecclechester Town



—(Picture courtesy Mrs. Robert V. H. Duncan)

Figure 3
Historical Society of Fairfax County

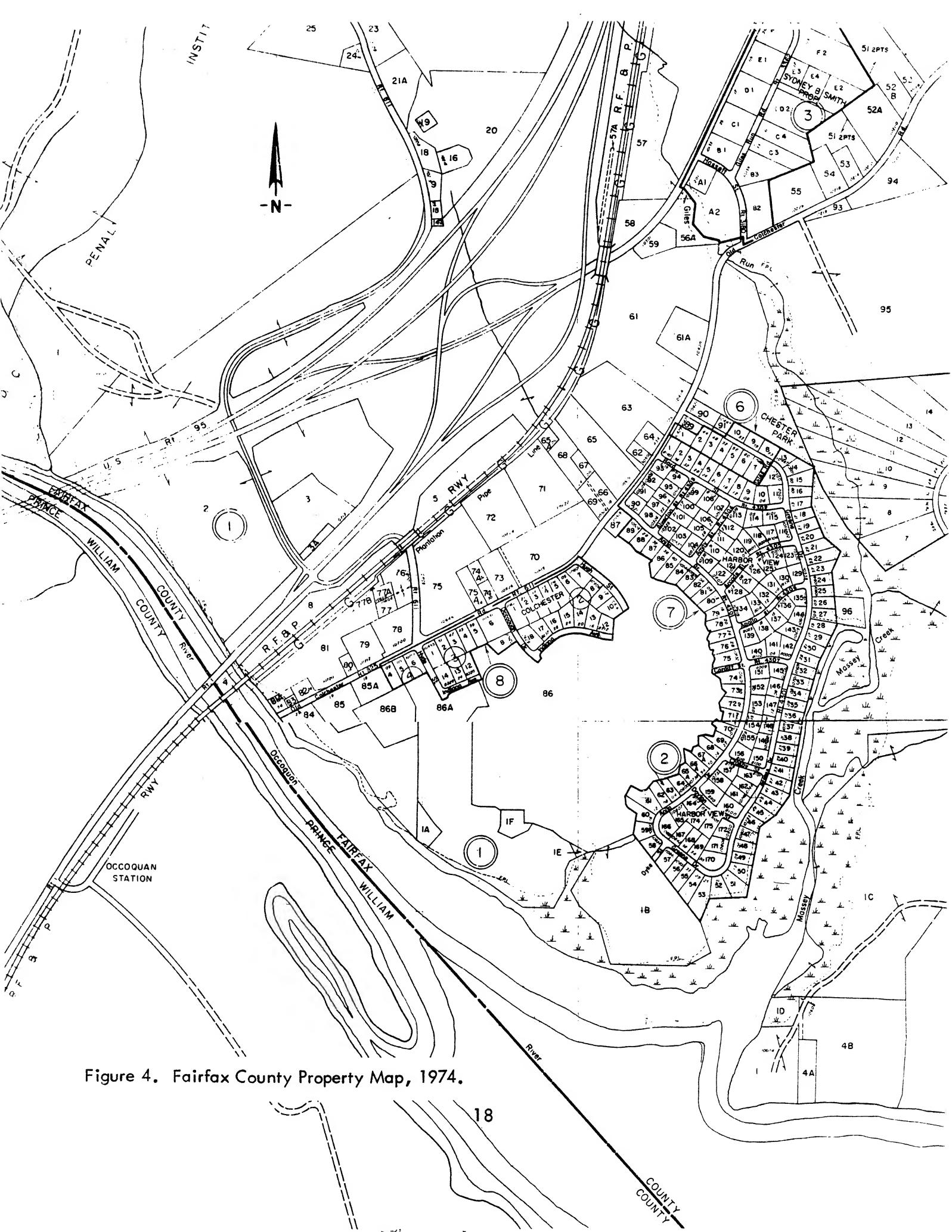


Figure 4. Fairfax County Property Map, 1974.

Whereas the ferry across the Occoquan from the lands of Mrs. Ann Mason, widow, in Prince William to the lands of Mrs. Ann Mason in Fairfax, hath been found to be very convenient to the people of each county, and was always, until Prince William was divided, maintained at the expense of the said county: but since the division whereof, the justices of each county have refused to make an annual charge ... in their levy ... therefore, the justices of both counties are to contract with Mrs. Mason to run the said ferry ...⁸

The tract above the ferry was sold in 1746 by the heir of Mrs. Luke to a merchant in Prince William County named John Graham.⁹ He was one of a group of Scottish traders who operated stores on Quantico Creek in Prince William and on Hunting Creek in Fairfax County. These men were engaged during the 1740's in promoting the formation of towns at the sites of their trading posts. Competitive attempts were made to have the Virginia Assembly authorize a town at these places or on the Occoquan. Graham, already owning land on Quantico Creek, thus obtained a foothold on Occoquan if the Assembly should decide to choose that location for a townsite.

On May 11, 1749, charters were granted for the town of Dumfries on Graham's land at Quantico and for another on Hunting Creek, to be named Alexandria. Both towns were laid out on 60 acres and both were subsequently enlarged. By the time John Graham sold his land on the upper bank of the Occoquan in March 1753, both of the new towns were well established.¹⁰

The Town on the Occoquan

The new owner of the 351½ acre tract was Peter Wagener, Clerk of the Fairfax County Court. Having paid double the price¹¹ at which the land had last been sold, Wagener wasted no time in urging the Assembly to give a charter for the town which he proposed to establish. Eight months later the enabling Act was passed, stating that the said town "would be very convenient for trade and navigation" and "greatly to the ease and advantage of the frontier inhabitants." The site was to be surveyed within 12 months, "beginning at the upper side of the ferry landing and extending down the said river, to the land of Waugh; thence back into the said Wagener's land ... so as to include twenty-five acres."¹²

The legislation did not specify a name for the town. This must have been chosen by Peter Wagener, whose home in England had been near the town of Colchester in Essex. The history of that community went back to pre-Roman Britain. Once known as Camulodunum, it had been the capital of a federation of tribes in the southeast. Before the Roman invasion it was ruled by the king of Catuvellauni. The town covered an area of about 12 square miles, which was enclosed by dykes during the reign of Cunobelinus. His son, Caratacus, ruled about the year 43 A.D. The Roman Emperor Claudius was there during the invasion and chose the town as the first Roman capital. After a time it was superseded by Londinium (the present city of London).¹³ A more recent link between the two Colchesters was the siege of the English town in 1648 by General Fairfax, whose family name was given to the county in which the new Colchester was located.¹⁴

The namesake town in the Virginia colony may have had a different pronunciation in its early days. Mrs. Rosemary Selecman, who was married in 1909, stated that her mother-in-law always pronounced Colchester as if the first syllable rhymed with "doll."¹⁵ The Selecman family has owned land in the Occoquan area since the eighteenth century.

Colchester's charter was similar to that of other new towns of the period. Lots were not to exceed half an acre in size. Within two years time a building at least 20' square, with roof of a 9' pitch, had to be constructed on each lot in order to validate the title; if this were not done the lot would revert to the town trustees to resell for the benefit of the town. The original purchase price went to Peter Wagener, owner of the town land.

Houses might be built of brick, stone, or wood. Wooden chimneys were prohibited as a fire hazard. The residents were also forbidden to allow pigs to run at large in the streets. They were responsible, under the supervision of the Trustees, for keeping the streets and the public wharf in good repair. Provision was made for a market square as well as a public landing, and it was ordered that the town be surveyed and laid out within a year's time. Five trustees were appointed to govern the town.

All of these men lived in the general area; but of the five only Peter Wagener (who held title to the entire unsold acreage) ever purchased lots in the town. In 1771 he bought five specific lots, although no deed was recorded until 1788¹⁶ at the time of the Wagener-Mason lawsuit.

The reluctance of the other four trustees to purchase town lots is as surprising as the slowness in lot sales, especially when it is considered that in nearby Alexandria at least five of the 11 trustees did so at the initial auction of lots in 1749. Nearly all of the lots in Alexandria were sold during the auction. Neighboring planters like George Mason of Gunston Hall supported the new town by buying lots. (Mason was a Trustee of Dumfries in Prince William County.)

In Colchester, on the other hand, there were only two buyers at the initial sale and only one-third of the 42 lots were sold. Neither purchaser lived in Fairfax County. Daniel McCarty, William Ellzey, John Barry and their fellow trustee Edward Washington were not participants, neither were landowners on nearby Mason Neck such as Catesby Cocke of Belmont or George Mason.

McCarty's and Barry's abstention may have stemmed from their involvement with the Pohick warehouse, and Washington's position as an inspector of the tobacco at Occoquan warehouse. Perhaps they had no desire to foster a potential rival of these establishments. (Too little is known of Ellzey to guess at his motivation.) It is, however, a curious circumstance that the governing body of the town did not see fit to show their confidence in its future by investing in it.

The town was surveyed in June 1754. George West laid out 42 lots and four streets, 60 feet in width. Because of the town's triangular shape (a result of the 1729 division of the original patent) not all of the lots contained half an acre. Most measured 165 feet by 132 feet. There were six small wedge-shaped lots. On the downstream end of town the lots were of irregular size. The east line of the town ran on the dividing line of the patent.

Streets were not named on the town plat, but county deedbooks show that the present road (county route #825) leading to the marina was Essex Street. It was part

of the Kings Highway and was later referred to as the Great Road or the Stage Road. Fairfax Street paralleled it on the south. The cross street was known as Wine Street. One other street is shown on the plat as a continuation of Furnace Road (county route #611, formerly Ox Road) along the east boundary of the town. No name reference to this has been found in deeds and it may not have functioned as a street.¹⁷

The ferry landing was at the foot of Essex Street and a spring on the hillside is still known as the ferry spring. The public wharf was on Fairfax Street, located approximately where remains of pilings from a later wharf rise above water level.¹⁸

The first sale of lots took place in May 1756. Six were bought by Benjamin Grayson and two by William Bayly. Both men lived in Prince William County. Grayson chose two lots adjacent to the public wharf (#6, 42), one (#3) as close as he could get to the ferry landing, and three (#19, 21, 23) full-size lots near the intersection of Essex Street and the Ox Road. His purchase of #3 indicates that these fronting the river (#1, 36, 2) were being held back by Wagener or considered by George Mason as part of the ferry landing and therefore his. William Bayly contented himself with two lots (#4, 13) just behind the waterfront on the south side of Essex Street. The latter lot fronted on the area set aside as the market square.

Peter Wagener waited until 1771 to obtain a deed for the waterfront lots and two others (#17 across from the market and #9 at the southern end of town). Wagener had an ordinary (tavern) operating in 1757 and Bayly opened one at his house the next year. Grayson ran a store on his property.

With these enterprises in being another sale was held in September 1758. Five more men invested in eight lots, all but two clustering around the market place. John McIntosh, a tailor, bought #20 on the south side of Essex Street; in front of him Morris Pound, a native of Germany, got two lots on the east side of Wine Street facing the market (#18, 26). Next to Pound on the north side of Fairfax Street, George Carpenter had #27. The German planted a vineyard on his land and a tanyard was later established on Carpenter's lot. Mindful, perhaps, of the possibility that the cross-roads might become the focus of activity, Carpenter also purchased #25 and #39 at the northeast edge of town. The lot across from the market place on Essex Street, #15, was the first real estate that young merchant Alexander Henderson obtained in Colchester. The following year he was to buy from Valentine Cloninger of Prince William County #14, first purchased that day in 1758.

The Trustees sold no more lots until May 1759. At that time Philip Peill, a merchant in Fairfax County, bought #12. Edward Conner, who lived in Loudoun County, may have speculated that the wagon trade beginning to travel from the westward down Ox Road might bring prosperity to the new settlement. The Reverend Andrew Burnaby, seeing it in 1759, wrote that the town was built for the sake of the back country trade and seemed more impressed with the forge, mills and sawmills operating two miles upstream below the falls.

Conner's purchase consisted of five lots chosen for their strategic position; #5 and #38 faced Fairfax Street at the waterfront and the others (#22, 24, 40) were those nearest the crossroads on the south side of Essex Street. Like Cloninger, whose name often appears in the store ledgers, Conner was a customer of Henderson and may have been holding the water lots on his behalf. Whether this was the case, or whether he

revised his predictions of the town's future, Conner sold those lots to Henderson and divested himself of two others, keeping only #40 for himself.

A contemporary letter describes the town:

Colchester on Occoquan, Va.
May 1760

Dear cousin Mary, I have opportunity to send you a message by Mr. John McGregor, master of the brig "Good Fortune," which came into our port of entry nearly three weeks ago, and is now loading with tobacco and will sail for London in a few days. By the Good Fortune we received your welcome letter and the bale of acceptable tokens of your abiding remembrance and affection. Nothing you could have sent us would have been more useful to us in this far off country. We are very grateful for your good offices. McGregor is said to be a good seaman and his vessel very staunch, but the weather at sea was very tempestuous and he was nearly six weeks making the voyage. May he find more favoring gales on his return. I have concluded to be a Virginian and to cast my lot among the colonists. I like the country. It is a land of plenty for everybody. Colchester has a very pleasant situation on a deep river. Its trade is increasing and houses are building. We see many Indians passing through, but they are friendly and going over the mountains. The wars are over and the plantations are peaceful and quiet. We have regular church service in the neighborhood. The people are very hospitable to all newcomers. Remember me to all inquiring friends, and believe me as ever,

'Your loving cousin'
Joseph Adams¹⁹

Trustees of the Town

The group designated by the Virginia Assembly in 1753 to govern Colchester consisted of Peter Wagener, Edward Washington, Daniel McCarty, John Barry and William Ellzey. The authority of the trustees was not subject to direction from the county justices (although Daniel McCarty also served in that capacity, as did, after 1764, William Ellzey²⁰), but only from the legislature. Wagener was the clerk of Fairfax County and other later trustees were also justices of the court, so that there would naturally have been close contact between the two bodies. Later trustees were Benjamin Grayson, Hector Ross, William Thompson and Alexander Henderson.

The trustees kept a set of town books, which have vanished. Reference was made to these in a 1788 deed²¹ but nothing is known of their contents. Of the nine men who governed the town, no evidence has come to light which shows that McCarty, Barry or Ellzey played an important part in Colchester affairs.

Peter Wagener

Peter Wagener lived on a plantation adjacent to Colchester which he called Stisted, after the name of the English parish where his father served from 1707 to 1742.

Previously the Reverend Mr. Wagener had spent two years in Virginia where, according to Governor Gooch, he "was better known as a bad painter than as a parson." Born near Colchester in Essex, England on April 5, 1717, Peter Wagener came to Virginia in 1738 to practise law. "He told me," wrote the Governor, "if the climate agreed with him, and he met with encouragements, [he had determined] to stay."²²

The younger Wagener apparently did meet "encouragements," for two months after the letter was written the Virginia Gazette reported, "On Thursday the 5th instant, at Piscataqua in Essex County, Mr. Peter Wagener, attorney at law, only son of the Reverend and Worshipful Peter Wagener of Essex, England, was married to Miss Katy Robinson, only daughter of the Hon. John Robinson, one of His Majesty's Council, a young lady of very amiable qualities."²³ In 1742 Wagener was appointed clerk of the Prince William County court, and was still living in that county in 1748 when he advertised in the Maryland paper for a runaway Welsh blacksmith.²⁴ He assumed the clerkship of Fairfax County four years later, subsequently buying from John Graham the upper half of Bourne's patent and establishing himself on that tract.²⁵

The site of the Stisted house has not been located, but was recalled by a descendant:

I remember the old house, built after the English style, with lovely grass in which no weed was allowed to show its head, and sprinkled with wild hyacinth from England. Luscious pears grew by the old well and a giant black walnut tree in the near field. How delicious was the rice and syrup Aunt Mary Lee used to fix for us after our long trip along the river and the bay! And how fine the "sugar pears" we stole from the chest up in the room under the rafters!... the old home is gone and the railroad runs through the once tender, green grass!²⁶

In the field below the present Lazy Susan Inn, near the river bank, are the graves of Peter Wagener's son and of Aunt Mary Lee.

The Wageners lived comfortably at Stisted. They had a chariot drawn by four horses and a riding chair for individual travel. Some of the furniture may have been made on the plantation, for Wagener's inventory mentions three walnut tables and a walnut desk. They had nearly two dozen Queens china plates and 35 made of pewter, and the house was heated by a cannon stove. Peter had a silver watch and wore silver stock buckles but his reading matter was "The Compleat Farmer."²⁷

His son, also named Peter, was made deputy clerk for Fairfax County in 1762, when 20 years of age, and succeeded his father as clerk ten years later.²⁸ In 1770 he became a vestryman of Truro Parish. Upon the death of his father, who left no will, he inherited the estate. On April 14, 1774, Wagener married Sinah, the daughter of Daniel McCarty. She was then about 18 years of age, and McCarty gave his new son-in-law a thousand acre tract in Fauquier County.²⁹ The Wageners had two sons, Beverly and Peter, and five daughters. Sinah (who married first Morton, then Porter), Ann (who married John Simpson), Sarah (who married Joseph Red), and Mary (who married first Grayson, then Beal).³⁰ Mary's first marriage was not approved by her father, who cut her out of his will.

George Washington, en route to the 1775 Convention in Richmond, stopped to dine with Wagener. They had often gone foxhunting together before the Revolution. During that conflict Wagener was first the lieutenant for Fairfax County and later a colonel. Among his other duties he set up the cannon to defend Alexandria when the British came up the Potomac in 1781,³¹ and was clerk of the Hustings Court in Alexandria from its first session in 1780. Under his direction the county militia improved the road leading from the Georgetown ferry to the ford across the Occoquan at Wolf Run Shoals (inundated by the present reservoir) so that wagon trains of the forces converging on Yorktown would not be delayed by the ferry at Colchester.³² After the Revolution he continued to act as county lieutenant and in 1790 was an Overseer of the Poor.³³

Wagener had apparently kept the Fairfax County records at his house when the courthouse in Alexandria became dilapidated; he requested permission from the court to move them back to that town on February 21, 1791, but two years passed before this was accomplished. Thus, it may have been that the records were housed near Colchester as they had been when Catesby Cocke was county clerk before 1752.³⁴

In 1793, when Peter Wagener wrote his will, he stated that he was then in perfect health. The bulk of his estate went to his son, the fourth Peter Wagener. It included Stisted, the tavern called the Stone Ordinary, a lot near the gate of the town, and half a lot in Alexandria. Bequests to his wife included half of the Fauquier tract given him by Col. McCarty. Beverly, their oldest son, had apparently been given part of the land previously. His estate was valued later at nearly \$6,000, which did not include the 29 slaves.

Wagener died before May 1798. His wife Sinah lived until Christmas Day, 1809.³⁵ Her directions as to the disposal of her property led to a lawsuit between her children, caused possibly by the stipulation that her sons-in-law were to have no control over it. Sinah Morton, the Wagener's oldest daughter, had first choice of her mother's lots. She apparently chose those on the waterfront, for in 1829 she sold three lots to Thompson Clarke; two on opposite sides of Essex Street at the river (probably #1, 36, 2) and another farther downstream near the old tobacco warehouse (#9).³⁶

Sinah Morton also bought one-third of the Stisted tract from her brother Peter in 1810. This third was allotted to her niece (who was Peter's daughter), Martha Ann Wagener.³⁷ Martha Ann and her husband Edward Bates lived on the tract during the early years of their marriage and owned the 286½ acres until 1859, although before that time they had moved to Lebanon (on Mason Neck). The tract extended from Ox Road to the Occoquan and included Bates landing and Bates Creek.³⁸

Martha Ann's sister, Mary Elizabeth, inherited 182½ acres of Stisted from the fourth Peter Wagener, who died about 1812 without leaving a will. Mary Elizabeth married Daniel Lee after 1825³⁹ and the Lees lived on the land until after the Civil War. She was the Aunt Mary Lee mentioned in the description of Stisted. Mrs. Lee died in 1870. Her children sold some of the property after her death but retained 94 acres until 1907.⁴⁰

Of the town lots in Colchester owned by the Wageners, the land tax records show that from 1781 until 1798 they were taxed for four lots, from 1799 to 1810 for

two. From 1811 to 1826 taxes were paid on five (the added lots were #21, 23 and 38, bought by Wagener in 1811 along with the 2½ acre strip behind the lots). The value of buildings on the latter lots was \$230 in 1817. After 1826 the Wagener lots were divided between his daughters. Mrs. Bates got the three lots without buildings, of which #38 ("a wharf lot") she sold in 1829 to Thompson Clarke.⁴¹ Heirs of Bates paid taxes on two lots until 1873, and on one until 1874.

Mrs. Lee inherited the two improved lots (#21, 23?). In 1833 Thomas Beard bought an unidentified lot from her.⁴² The Lee's son in 1878 sold 17 acres between the town and the railroad; this tract was acquired in 1886 by the Weston family. Weston descendants (the Metzgers) own part of this land in 1974.⁴³

Edward Washington

An inspector at the tobacco warehouse below the falls of the Occoquan River in 1749,⁴⁴ Washington had been in Prince William County since 1734. He was under-sheriff in 1737. Two years later he sold a tract to William Fairfax which later became part of Belvoir plantation.⁴⁵ Washington married Mary, the widow of Edward Barry of Huntington, and was appointed guardian for her three children. Huntington, on Silverbrook Road (Route #600) near Ox Road (Route #123), contained 504 acres.⁴⁶ Their dwelling was standing in 1972, but scheduled for future demolition. Despite a fancied resemblance to Lund Washington of Hayfield and his more famous cousin of Mount Vernon, Edward's branch of the Washington family is thought to have come from Ireland.⁴⁷

When the tobacco inspection was moved downstream to Colchester in 1763, Edward Washington became an inspector at that place. In 1765 he received 154 votes in an unsuccessful bid for election to the vestry of Truro Parish.⁴⁸ He died on March 31, 1792. Edward, his son, succeeded him at the warehouses and also served as vestryman from 1779 to 1785.⁴⁹ The younger Edward Washington died in 1813, leaving seven children, and his family sold Huntington in the late 1820's. The farm was purchased in 1831 by Isaac Hutton, an Englishman, and remained in the same family until the 1960's when it was acquired by the Cafritz Company.⁵⁰

John Barry

Little is known of this trustee except that he was an inspector at Pohick warehouse in 1758, 1759 and 1765.⁵¹ Barry does not appear on the 1748/9 List of Tithables in Truro Parish; he may have been a child of Edward Barry who by 1751 was old enough not to require a guardian. There is also a William Barry on that list. John could have been a member of his family.

John Barry was a collector of tithes in 1740 and 1742, a partner in McCarty & Barry, clerk of Truro Parish from 1765 to 1775.⁵² He died in 1775.

William Ellzey (Elzey)

Ellzey's first appearance in the Fairfax County Court Order Books was in May 1758. His name is not on the aforementioned Tithables list, but he may have been one of the family of Lewis Elzey, justice and vestryman. William Ellzey was an attorney. His conduct on May 17, 1763 seems to have displeased the court, for they accused him of misbehavior and told the sheriff to keep him in custody until he put up £50 as bond. The following year he became a justice of that court.

By 1774 he was on the Loudoun County Committee of Correspondence, and one of the Virginia trustees for the project for improving navigation on the Potomac.⁵³ Ellzey was also a trustee of the new town at Warm Springs. His wife was Frances Westwood.⁵⁴

Ellzey died in Loudoun on January 24, 1796. His obituary said he had practised law for 40 years. A few months after his death, his son was elected to represent the county in the Virginia legislature.⁵⁵

Daniel McCarty

Vestryman of Truro Parish 1749-1784, justice from 1749 to 1783, and a trustee of the Patowmack Company in 1774, Daniel McCarty played many roles in Fairfax County affairs. In 1749 he was inspector of the Pohick warehouse, which was built on his land. McCarty was the son of burgess, vestryman, and justice Dennis McCarty of Mount Air, and the grandson of Daniel McCarty, Speaker of the House of Burgesses in 1717. Like Barry and Ellzey, McCarty did not seem to be involved in Colchester affairs.⁵⁶

Benjamin Grayson

Captain Benjamin Grayson was a Scots merchant in Prince William County and a justice of that county court in November 1731. The first courthouse stood on the lower shore of the Occoquan near the ferry landing in the present town of Woodbridge. Grayson lived about two miles south of the Occoquan at Belle Air, which is no longer standing.⁵⁷ Grayson was twice married, first to Susanna Monroe and then to a Mrs. Sinton.⁵⁸ His son William was a Colonel in the Revolution and one of the first two United States Senators from Virginia; another son, Spence, was the rector of Cameron Parish in Loudoun County and later of Dettingen Parish in Prince William.

Grayson purchased six lots in Colchester in 1756 and established a store there before his death in 1757. His son Benjamin continued the business. Young Alexander Henderson, arriving in 1758, considered Grayson a formidable rival. "He is a young man, just come to a pretty good fortune, has a number of people in debt to him, and seems to regard the extent rather than the cheapness of his purchase."⁵⁹

With his fellow merchants Henderson and Ross, Grayson was soon selling lottery tickets along with his other merchandise.⁶⁰ Unlike these cautious Scots, however, Benjamin Grayson lost no time before expanding into new ventures. He leased

Catesby Cocke's thousand acre Mason Neck plantation, Belmont, in 1760 and paid £800 for it the next year.⁶¹ In 1762 Grayson entered into partnership with entrepreneur John Ballendine in a flour mill, bakery, and store upstream from Colchester on the lower shore of the Occoquan.⁶² He was active in urging that the decaying Occoquan warehouse be abandoned and new tobacco inspection be established in Colchester. A revealing line in Henderson's ledger shows a debt of £15 owed by Grayson, who agreed to repay Henderson "the money by him expended in promoting the remove of the inspection and his consent to the warehouses being fixed on your lot in Colchester."⁶³ The warehouses were built on Grayson's lot.

He bought a mill site on Pohick Creek and between 1763 and 1765 added to the six lots inherited from his father several others, including #7, 8 and 29. In the midst of these activities he became a justice of the Fairfax Court by March 1763, and also had a hand in an unsuccessful attempt to start a commercial winery in the town. Grayson's holdings seem to have included 14 lots, which left him considerably over-extended financially. As early as June, 1762 he began mortgaging parts of his property to his Glasgow principals, Blackburn, Scott & Company, and to other creditors.⁶⁴

A contributing factor in Grayson's decline may have been his purchases of such items as a dozen packs of playing cards.⁶⁵ This of course can be only conjecture. Whatever the cause, Blackburn & Company obtained a court decree in June 1765 which stated that Grayson had no rights to lots #6 and 42 and that their firm was empowered to sell all of his property. Frequent advertisements appeared in both the Maryland and Virginia papers offering for sale the Belmont tract, the tobacco warehouses, and the town lots.⁶⁶

To add to his other woes, Grayson was defeated in the 1765 vestry election.

By October 1766 Benjamin Grayson and his wife Elizabeth had fled to Loudoun County and sold Belmont to his Glasgow firm for £100. The warehouses and the lots met the same fate. Henderson's ledger for October 1767 refers to Grayson as insolvent. He added wryly that he had lost half the £22 balance due on Grayson's account.⁶⁷

A few belongings were salvaged. Grayson kept his silver watch, a silver tankard, and an assortment of spoons, but he had only two beds and a modest amount of furniture (including a broken backgammon table). When he died, before April 1768, his possessions were valued at £52.12.9.⁶⁸ His widow retained her dower rights in lots #3, 19, 21, 23 and a family chronicler wrote that she had secured a "handsome estate" to leave her son and daughter.⁶⁹

Grayson's brother Spence paid tax on three of the lots 1782-1798 and two others were listed in the tax books of that period as belonging to the Grayson estate. Benjamin Grayson's brief career well illustrates the difficulties in which Virginia merchants often became entangled.

Hector Ross

The career of Hector Ross contrasts sharply with that of Benjamin Grayson. A factor, or resident agent, for David Dalzel, George Oswald & Company of Glasgow

(later known as Oswald & Denniston), Hector Ross was in Colchester as early as April 3, 1760. On that date he was mentioned in the Maryland Gazette as one of the merchants handling sales of tickets for a benefit lottery for an Alexandrian returning to England. This predated by two years Alexander Henderson's first acknowledgement of the presence of yet another competitor, although he sold Ross a supply of a popular medicine known as Turlington's Balsam of Life that same spring.⁷⁰ In a letter to his own employer, Henderson wrote, "I fear Mr. Ross, who is now come for a powerful company in Glasgow and whose goods have now arrived, will be a very potent rival and troublesome neighbor to me"⁷¹ Despite this lack of enthusiasm Henderson had not hesitated to sell Ross his lot #15 in July 1761 for £120 current money. As the purchase price in 1758 had been only £15 sterling, the increase reflected the improvements made by Henderson and perhaps a modest profit. Ross also leased property from Grayson between 1763 and 1765.⁷²

By 1770 Ross had gained a sufficient footing in commerce to undertake, like Henderson, some public service. He was recommended for sheriff in August 1768 and served in that capacity by November 1770.⁷³ The previous summer he had attended a meeting of merchants in Williamsburg and was put on a committee to report on the estate of trade in the colony. In June he was made a justice of the Fairfax Court, a position which he held for 20 years.⁷⁴

Ross planned to go to Great Britain in late 1775, for he made out a power-of-attorney, but if the trip took place he was back in Virginia by the fall of 1778 and serving as sheriff.⁷⁵ During the Revolution he was the Commonwealth's Escheator in Alexandria⁷⁶ and also performed such services as furnishing Dr. Jenefer for use of the Continental Hospital 300 lb. coffee, 500 lb. tea, 500 lb. brown sugar and "2 pieces of oznabrigs with necessary thread to make the same into beds for the sick."⁷⁷

According to deeds in 1775 and 1788, Hector Ross was a trustee during this period, although it appears that he went to Alexandria when John Gibson arrived in Colchester as replacement for Dalzel, Oswald & Company. That firm had stores at Aquia, Bladensburg, Piscataway and Georgetown.⁷⁸

Ross added several lots to his original purchase of #15 in Colchester, buying #12 in January 1772 and #3, 19, 21 and 23 in September. In 1773 he sold the last four of these to Henderson and bought #6 and 42, the lots originally intended for the tobacco warehouses. Between 1770 and 1772 Ross sold an unspecified lot to his Glasgow firm.⁷⁹ A water lot at the south tip of town (#11) was owned by Ross from 1775 to 1790. He sold #12 in August 1785 to his replacement as factor, John Gibson.

From 1782 to 1798 Ross paid taxes on three lots.

It was at the home of John Gibson, then living near Dumfries, that Hector Ross died on March 14, 1803. His obituary said that he was over 70 years of age,⁸⁰

a man of middle size, thin habit and delicate constitution; was for many years before the Revolution of America, a factor of a respectable mercantile house in Scotland which trust he discharged with fidelity to his employers, satisfaction to his customers and honor to himself - his wit was acute, his memory retentive, his judgment strong and his friendship sincere. Blest with an uncommon share of good nature and tenderness of heart, he was a check to the imperious, the

honest yeoman's friend and the poors' idol - in an extensive private acquaintance [he had] not one reviler-slander shrinks at his name ...

No mention was made of a family, but Hector Ross seems to have left a spotless reputation behind him.

William Thompson

The last of the known trustees of Colchester was also the latest in time to settle in the town. In December 1777 he was a Captain in the Fairfax Militia.⁸¹ The Virginia Gazette referred to him as a merchant in Colchester offering tickets for a lottery on November 27, 1779. Thompson was in August of that year acquiring the #19-21-23 group of lots from Alexander Henderson. He bought #14 in 1782 and #38 (the wharf lot) three years later. In 1788 Henderson sold him #30 and in 1790 Thompson bought another water lot, #11, from Ross. Lot #14, "where he had lately resided,"⁸² he sold in 1795 to Richard Chichester; the following year #30 was also sold.⁸³

The cluster bought from Henderson may have included #25 and 39, as well as the strip behind the five lots, for no later deeds have been found for #25 and 39. The strip behind these lots was sold in 1811 by Thompson's executors, along with #21 and 23.⁸⁴

Thompson's standing in the community may be judged by the succession of public offices entrusted to him as well as by his eight lots in the town. He was still a Captain in the Fairfax Militia in 1787. In October of that year he was appointed, with Peter Wagener and others, to a committee who were to get the freeholders of the county to sign a paper endorsing the new Federal Constitution.⁸⁵ By 1788 he was a trustee of the town and from 1790 to 1793 its postmaster.⁸⁶ In June 1790 he became a justice of the Fairfax court.⁸⁷

Thompson was in partnership with a Mr. Washington,⁸⁸ who was a relative of his wife Ann. She had a brother (Lund) living in Colchester and an uncle (Lawrence)⁸⁹ living at Belmont plantation on Mason Neck. Ann Thompson inherited Belmont from her uncle and lived there during her widowhood. In Colchester the Thompsons were in 1793 living near the town gate⁹⁰, most likely in the house now known as the Fairfax Arms.

William Thompson made his will in 1796, mentioning a son and two daughters but leaving his estate to his wife. During his last years he may have suffered financial reverses, for in 1797 he sold four of his lots, and later sold the bulk of his household goods to his wife's uncle to meet security on a bond.⁹¹

Ann Thompson's husband and her uncle died that same year. The household goods were sold in April 1799 and Lawrence Washington's will was presented for probate on December 16th; William Thompson's will was probated on January 20, 1800.

Many of the household items were already at Belmont, according to her uncle's inventory.⁹² The Colchester house was rented to Zachariah Ward in 1800⁹³ and Mrs. Thompson moved to Belmont. Her son lived there until about 1829.

Chapter II Notes

1

This church was mentioned in the 1730 Act establishing Hamilton Parish, when freeholders were directed to meet at the church above the ferry (Hening, Statutes, IV, 304). In the Vestry Book of Truro Parish this church was called Occoquan Church until 1733, then referred to as Pohic. It may have been then moved to the crossroad location where Cranford Methodist Church stands (at Gunston Hall Road and Old Colchester Road). A church at that site was used until the present Pohick Church was completed in 1774.

Traces of brick foundations have been found at both of these early churches. Susan Annie Plaskett, in her Memories of a Plain Family (p. 47) spoke of her father having discovered one when he helped to dig a new grave in the Methodist churchyard near the 1842 tombstone of Thompson Clarke. A recent investigation by Edward F. Heite of the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission in the long-abandoned town cemetery in the woods at Colchester disclosed evidence of a brick foundation at that place. The Colchester cemetery is on tract #113 ((1)) 85A on the Fairfax County Property Map.

2

Nugent, Cavaliers, p. 563. The full text of the grant is cited in Fairfax County Proceedings in Land Causes, II, p. 15.

3

Fairfax County Deed Book R-1, pp. 284, 349. Wagener v. Mason. The William Harris who owned the land in 1688 may have been that "Good Briton" who died in 1698; his tombstone has been moved to the churchyard of the present Pohick Church.

4

Elizabeth Luke lived in England. She may have been Luke's wife, in Fairfax County Proceedings in Land Causes, I, p. 76 (Wagener v. Lindsay) or his daughter. She was termed that in p. 6 (Bayly v. Henderson) of the same volume.

Bayly v. Henderson establishes the Waugh possession of the lower half of the patent. The missing 300 acres may perhaps have been the land owned in the seventeenth century by John Peake, which included a landing where the ferry docked.

5

This line separates property #113 ((1)) 84, owned by the Beach family, from #113 ((1)) 86A, owned by Timberlake McCue.

6

Fairfax County Proceedings in Land Causes, I, p. 87.

7

Fairfax County Deed Book R-1, pp. 284, 349.

8

Hening, Statutes, V, 252.

9

Fairfax County Deed Book B-1, p. 210. Graham paid £150 for what was still considered to be 500 acres, despite the findings of the 1729 survey.

10

Harrison, Landmarks, pp. 386-7, 424.

11

Fairfax County Deed Book C-1, p. 471. This page is missing, but the price of the land is cited in Lindsay v. Wagener as £300.

12

Hening, Statutes, VI, 396. The charter was issued in November.

13

David Divine, Hadrian's Wall: A Study of the Northwest Frontier of Rome (Boston: Gambit, Incorporated, 1969), pp. 12, 18.

14

A map depicting "The Siege of Colchester, Essex, by the Lord Fairfax . . .," made by T. Witham in 1650, is in the British Museum.

15

Occoquan's designation as a river rather than a creek, an official change made by the U. S. Board of Geographic Names in 1971, was the result of Mrs. Selecman's ten year campaign to restore the name shown on early maps. Interview, May 1971.

16

Fairfax County Deed Book R-1, p. 288.

17

Fairfax County Deed Book L-1, p. 239. An 11 acre strip along the east boundary of the town was mortgaged in 1774 with a 33 foot easement for an access road to the beach.

18

Virginia Journal and Alexandria Advertiser, April 29, 1784, offered two water lots for rent, lying along the street running from the tobacco warehouse to the public wharf. The warehouse was located on Fairfax Street. There was a wharf at this location at the end of the nineteenth century, according to members of the Beach family of Colchester. A dip in the tree line along the bank may indicate the alignment of Fairfax Street.

19

Snowden, Some Landmarks, p. 83.

20

Fairfax County, Official Records of the Colonial Period in Fairfax County, Virginia (Fairfax: by the county, n.d.), p. 14.

21

Fairfax County Deed Book R-1, p. 288.

22

Letter from Governor Gooch to the Bishop of London, May 21, 1739, Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, XXXIII (January 1925), p. 56.

23

Virginia Gazette, July 13/20, 1739.

24

Maryland Gazette, May 18, 1748.

25

Fairfax County Deed Book C-1, p. 471.

26

"Childhood Recollections as Told by Mary Catherine (Shreve) Birch," typescript, Lebanon file, Virginiana Collection, Fairfax County Central Library. Mrs. Birch was born at Stisted in 1845. In a manuscript genealogy owned by Mrs. Murray F. Rose, Falls Church, Virginia, the house was described as "a rambling dormer-windowed colonial house."

27

Fairfax County Will Book C-1, p. 249. Inventory of the estate of Peter Wagener, September 19, 1774.

28

Fairfax County Court Order Books, December 21, 1762 and May 18, 1772.

29

The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources 1745-1799, ed. by John C. Fitzpatrick (39 vols; Washington: prepared under the direction of the United States George Washington Bicentennial Commission and published by authority of Congress, 1931-1934) III, 208. The Loudoun tract is mentioned in the will of Peter Wagener, Fairfax County Will Book G-1, p. 404.

30

Fairfax County Deed Book J-1, p. 268. Margaret's name does not appear in Wagener's will but is listed in the lawsuit.

31

Journals of the Council of the State of Virginia, ed. by H.R. McIlwaine (3 vols.; Richmond; Virginia State Library, 1932) I, July 4, 1777; April 6, 1781.

32

Washington, Writings, XXIII, 109.

33

Fairfax County Court Order Book, June 16, 1783, June 21, 1790.

34

Order Book, February 21, 1792. In January 1752 Richard Rogers, deputy clerk, petitioned the court to move the clerk's office from Occoquan Ferry to his own house.

35

Fairfax County Will Book I-1, p. 132. Sinah Wagener's will is in Will Book J-1, p. 266.

36

Fairfax County Deed Book A-3, p. 147. Sinah Wagener Morton was by then Mrs. Porter, of Fauquier County.

37

Fairfax County Deed Book X-2, p. 188. On July 10, 1827 Sinah deeded the tract to the Bates, who were mentioned as living on the land. Sinah's deed from her brother is indexed in missing Deed Book K-2, p. 272.

38

Two later deeds give information on this tract. Deed Book C-4, p. 333, Bates' sale to John Underwood of lot 2 in the division of Peter Wagener's land, states it to be $286\frac{1}{2}$ acres. In 1871 Underwood sold Ashael Troth 150 acres of this lot. The boundaries of the tract were Ox Road, a line from the road to the Occoquan at Bates Landing, up the shoreline to Bates Creek, and a line from the creek back to Ox Road, in Deed Book N-4, p. 195.

39

Fairfax County Deed Book W-2, p. 214. At that time Mary Elizabeth's share was put in trust until her marriage. This was lot 3 in Wagener's division, as stated in Deed Book C-4, p. 335, when she sold part of the tract to John Underwood in 1859.

40

Later Lee deeds were in 1871, when Edgar W., Thomas H. and Mary E. Wiley, her children, sold 75 acres to Oliver Underwood, running from the foot of a steep bank on the lower side of Alum Gut on the Occoquan, up the gut to Ox Road, down Ox Road to the line of the railroad, with the railroad to the river, and upriver to the beginning, in Deed Book N-4, p. 428; their sale of 83 acres to Ashael Troth, running from Bates Landing which was the lower corner of lot 2, downriver to Alum Gut and up the gut to Ox Road, on p. 43; in 1878 Lee sold the 17+ acres between the railroad and the town of Colchester, in Deed Book X-4, 238. In 1907, Edgar Lee sold 94 acres, which he termed "the residue of the land of Mary E. Lee," to John McElroy, in Deed Book W-6, p. 433.

41

Fairfax County Deed Book Y-2, p. 17.

42

Fairfax County Deed Book B-3, p. 11.

43

Fairfax County Deed Book X-4, p. 238, Lee to Haislip, and E-5, p. 621, Haislip to John Weston. It is not clear whether this 17 acres included the lots on the north side of Colchester Road (#36 through 17). A suit in 1960, Williams v. Seidell, Chancery File #15098 determined that it did include them, but Lewis Weston and his family had paid taxes on 7 lots since 1855. His deed for #15, bought in 1831, is in Deed Book Z-2 p. 284. Title examiners' testimony in this lengthy suit indicated conflicting nineteenth century deeds, they concluded that it was impossible to prove the basic ownership of lots in this north tier.

44

Fairfax County Court Order Book, May 1749.

45

Prince William County Deed Book, D-1, p. 301.

46

Fairfax County Court Order Book, September 24, 1751; October 11, 1753. Edward Barry was a justice of the county court and clerk of the first vestry of Truro Parish. The plantation was advertised in the Phenix Gazette (Alexandria) on January 16, 1827.

47

Charles W. Stetson, Washington and His Neighbors (Richmond, Va.: Garrett and Massie, Incorporated, 1956), p. 190. See Cordelia Jackson, Edward Washington and His Kin (Washington: Mimeoform press, 1934).

48

Fairfax County Court Order Book, April 19, 1763. The vestry election is discussed in Philip Slaughter, The History of Truro Parish in Virginia . . ., ed. by Edward L. Goodwin (Philadelphia: George W. Jacobs & Co., 1908), p. 45.

49

Fairfax County Proceedings in Land Causes, II, 85. His stepdaughter testified as to the date of his death. Edward, Jr.'s appointment as inspector is in the Council Journal, III, May 13, 1782. Court Order Book, May 1787 lists him as a Captain in the Fairfax Militia.

50

Alexandria Gazette, Commercial & Political, June 8, 1813. Fairfax County Deed Book G-3, p. 369 names owners until 1831. Benjamin Nevitt, grandson of Isaac Hutton, lived at Huntington until about 1968. He was then in his 90's and had served on the vestry of Pohick Church for 50 years. Mr. Nevitt stated that the plaster and paneling in the parlor were original, and that the house, according to family tradition, had been built by Edward Barry in 1727.

51

John Glassford & Company Records 1753-1834, 288 vols., Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. He is listed as inspector in ledger #216 and 187, also in Fairfax County Court Order Book, August 21, 1759.

52

The Papers of George Mason 1725-1792, ed. by Robert A. Rutland (3 vols.; Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1970) I, glossary.

53

"Committee of Correspondence," William & Mary Quarterly, 1st series, XII (April 1904), p. 233. Mason, Papers, I, glossary.

54

Hening, Statutes, IX, 247. The "Westwood Genealogy" is given in William & Mary Quarterly, 1st series, XXVI (April 1918), p. 286.

55

Columbian Mirror & Alexandria Gazette, February 25, 1796; April 14, 1796.

56

For a comprehensive study of the McCarty's, see Edith M. Sprouse, Mount Air (Fairfax, Va.: Fairfax County Division of Planning, 1970).

57

Prince William: the Story of Its People and Its Places, American Guide Series (2nd printing; Richmond: Whittet & Shepperson for the Bethlehem Good House-keeping Club, Manassas, Virginia, 1961), pp. 76, 82.

58

Fred W. Grayson, "The Grayson Family," Tylers Quarterly Magazine, V (January 1924), p. 195.

59

Alexander Henderson MS Letterbook 1760-1764, Alexandria, Virginia, Public Library. Henderson to John Glassford, June 1758.

60

Maryland Gazette, April 3, 1760.

61

Fairfax County Deed Book D-1, p. 869.

62

Fairfax County Deed Book E-1, p. 43.

63

Glassford, Records, #186:159.

64

Fairfax County Deedbook D-1, p. 381 has 1760 deed for lots #25 and 39. Deed Book E-1, p. 156 refers to 1762 deed for #18 and 37. Grayson inherited #3, 6, 19, 23, 42 from his father. Missing Deed Book F-1, pp. 46, 271, 273 has deeds for other lots. Deed Book E-1, pp. 156, 339 and G-1, p. 93 have mortgages on his lots.

65

Glassford, Records, #187:107 (February 1765).

66

Fairfax County Deed Book G-1, p. 260 and K-1, p. 201. Ads appeared in the Maryland Gazette August 1, 1765, in the Virginia Gazette September 5, 1766, April 9, 1767 and December 1, 1773.

67

Fairfax County Deed Book G-1, p. 95. Grayson is of Loudoun County. Glassford, Records, #189:86.

68

Fairfax County Will Book C-1, p. 24. This was his Fairfax property. Grayson also had L155 in Loudoun County.

69

Fairfax County Deed Book K-1, p. 197 mentions her dower rights. Grayson, Grayson Family, mentions the legacy. Mrs. Grayson later married the Reverend Mouse. Glassford, Records, #225:124. 226:47.

70

Glassford, Records, #184:79.

71

Henderson, Letterbook, September 1762.

72

Fairfax County Deed Book D-1, p. 883, also missing Deed Book F-1, p. 356.

73

Fairfax County Court Order Book August 15, 1768; November 19, 1770.

74

Virginia Gazette, June 28, 1770. Calendar of Virginia State Papers and Other Manuscripts Preserved in the Capitol: covering the period from 1652 to 1869, ed. by H.W. Flounoy et al., (11 vols.; Richmond: by authority of the Legislature, 1875-1893), I, 263 and V, 172.

75

Fairfax County Deed Book M-1, p. 168, power of attorney. Council Journals, II, November 4, 1778.

76

Fairfax County Deed Book N-1, p. 251. This book, covering 1778 to 1783, although indexed, is missing.

77

Council Journals, II, September 8, 1781. Osnaburg was a coarse cotton fabric.

78

Fairfax County Deed Book A-2, p. 266. This deed, a power of attorney to John Laird in 1793, states that the firm's Colchester store was first run by Ross, then Gibson. The Aquia store was managed by Gibson, then John Murray. The Bladensburg store was under their partner Robert Dick, deceased. Piscataway was run by Thomas Claggett and the store in Georgetown by John Laird.

79

Fairfax County Deed Book J-1, p. 398. This deed book, which is missing, covers 1770 to 1771; the deed is indexed as Hector Ross to Oswald & Denniston, the name by which the firm was known at that date. The deed for #12 is referred to in Deed Book U-1, p. 478, when the lot was sold in 1785 to John Gibson. The deeds for #3, 19, 21, 23 are in Deed Book K-1, p. 197 and Deed Book L-1, p. 41. The purchase of #6 and 42 is in Deed Book K-1, p. 203; Ross sold them the following year to his firm, in Deed Book M-1, p. 217. The deeds for #11 are in Deed Book M-1, p. 172 and S-1, p. 505.

In 1805-1806 the attorney for the firm sold certain lots to Ann Muir, in missing Deed Book F-1, p. 228. In 1831 the executor of the deceased Mrs. Muir's husband sold #15 and 6, 42 in Deed Book Z-2, pp. 284, 292.

80

Alexandria Advertiser & Commercial Intelligencer, March 16, 1803.

81

Mason, Papers, I, glossary.

82

Fairfax County Deed Book Y-1, p. 465.

83

Fairfax County Deed Book N-1, p. 228, which is missing, has the deed for #19, 21, 23; p. 572 has the deed for #14. #38 is in Deed Book Y-1, p. 53 and Z-1, p. 289 is the sale of #30. Lot #11 is in S-1, p. 505.

84

Fairfax County Deed Book L-2, p. 7 states that the $2\frac{1}{2}$ acre strip had been sold by Wagener to Henderson in 1771, and by Henderson to Thompson.

85

Virginia Journal & Alexandria Advertiser, October 11, 1787.

86

Snowden, Some Landmarks, p. 83.

87

Calendar of State Papers, V, 172.

88

Snowden, Some Landmarks, p. 81.

89

"Descendents of Two John Washingtons," Virginia Magazine, XXIII (January 1915), p. 100; W.B. McGroarty, "Elizabeth Washington of Hayfield," XXXIII, (April 1925), p. 156 tells of this branch of the Washington family.

90

Peter Wagener's will, Fairfax County Will Book G-1, p. 404, bequeaths a lot "near the gate of the town between Thompson and where McPherson keeps store."

91

Fairfax County Deed Book B-1, p. 192.

92

William Thompson's will is in Fairfax County Will Book H-1, p. 164. Lawrence Washington's is on p. 52 and his inventory on p. 66. A wing of Belmont is standing

93

Columbian Mirror & Alexandria Gazette, October 9, 1800.

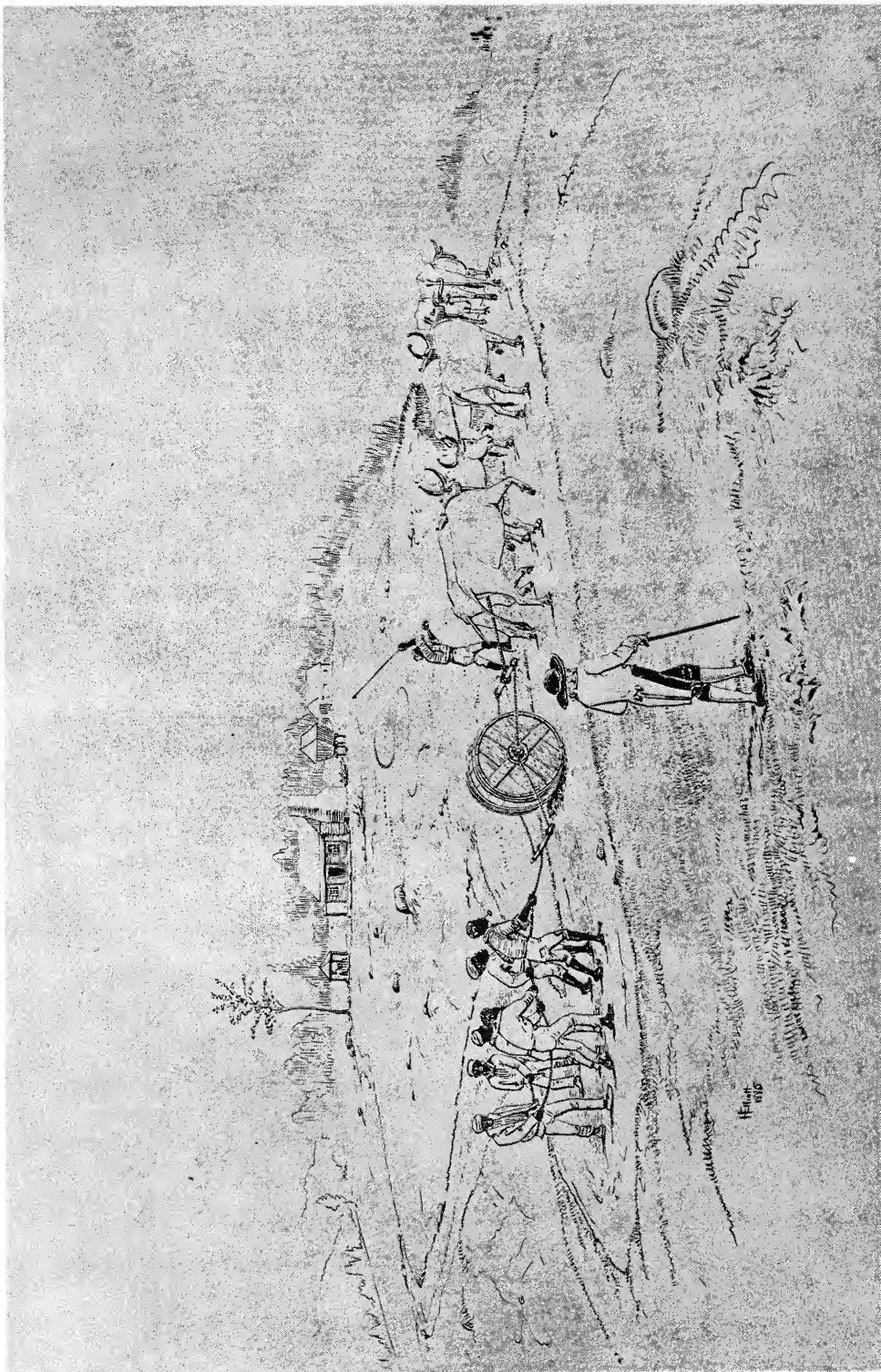


Figure 5. Tobacco hogshead being drawn by oxen along a rolling road. Smithsonian Institute.

Chapter III

COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES

It is a maxim with me never to refuse money.

Alexander Henderson, Letterbook

The Role of the Scots Merchants

The mercantile life of the town is reflected in the letters of Alexander Henderson to his employer in Glasgow, Scotland. The firm of John Glassford & Company established a system of stores along the rivers of Virginia and Maryland, sending young Scotsmen to the colonies as managers. These factors were transferred from one store to another on the Potomac and Patuxent Rivers; some later returned to the parent firm in Scotland while others settled permanently in America. Glassford had stores at Dumfries, Aquia, Boyd's Hole, Alexandria and Colchester. In Maryland their branches included Piscataway, Benedict, Nottingham and Port Tobacco. The fortunate survival of 288 volumes of the business records gives a wealth of material concerning everyday life in these port towns.¹ The firm is said to have owned 25 ships, which supplied the stores and returned loaded with tobacco, flour or bar iron. One Glasgow historian estimated that trade in the amount of £500,000 was carried on by Glassford & Company during the years preceding the American Revolution. In 1777 a Virginian remarked that "the Scots had got two thirds of Virginia and Maryland mortgaged."²

One of the resident agents employed by Glassford was Alexander Henderson, whose brother Archibald managed the Quantico Creek store. In April 1758 Archibald Henderson established a new store in Colchester, installing his 20 year old brother as factor. Benjamin Grayson, who was about the same age, was running his father's store in the new town. On April 10th Alexander Henderson arrived in Colchester, took up residence as a boarder at Peter Wagener's, rented a storehouse from him for £20 annually and went into business.³

In June he wrote John Glassford that another store had been started in Colchester and two others at the Occoquan tobacco warehouse two miles upstream. Henderson was selling £25 to £50 in goods monthly and proposed to order £1250 of stocks for the coming year. This would be delivered at the Quantico store and brought by cart to Colchester. An assistant, John Campbell, was sent out on the Nisbet from Glasgow. He arrived in September 1758.

The Prentis store in Williamsburg, although constructed about 1740, illustrates mid-eighteenth century commercial design. The shop proper, consisting of some 20 square feet, was in front, with a counting room and stairs at the rear of the building.

The front windows provided the only light, as the other three walls were covered with shelves. The fireplace was in the counting room. The upper storey served as a storage area and probably had goods hoisted up through a large front window. Sometimes the clerks slept above the shop.⁴

Among Henderson's first customers were Charles Tyler, who operated Wagener's Colchester Tavern and needed such items as flour, barley, nuts and rum; attorney George Johnston who purchased "twelve prints of Ladys framed;" and artisan William Buckland, who bought two hammers at five shillings apiece while he was finishing Gunston Hall. For Edward Conner of Loudoun County Henderson imported a wig from Glasgow and a silk suncap for his lady. He stocked all the necessities and sold vast quantities of the panacea, Turlington's Balsam of Life, which his customers seemed to use for all ailments. Most accounts were paid in tobacco, many carried over from one year to the next. As was to be expected there was soon a separate page in the ledger headed "Desperate Debts."

Henderson was doing well enough by September 1758, to make his first land purchase. He bought lot #15 on the north side of Essex Street facing the marketplace for £15.10. Its location made it more expensive than those farther up the street. John McIntosh, the tailor, had paid only £9 the previous week for lot #20. Although the store was doing moderately well, Henderson, after his brother had almost been drowned in Quantico Creek in December unloading goods from an iced-in vessel, paused to give some thought to his own future. He was uncertain of the wisdom of signing a six year contract with Glassford & Company. "I can't expect to be in a condition to settle in my native country in a shorter time, not indeed then, for which reason I must be looking out for some way of life in this country," the young man wrote in 1759. The arrangement with Glassford allowed him to import only £100 in goods for personal trading during the year beside his wages of £15. Henderson told his employer that he wished to sell goods wholesale to merchants in Dumfries and make a little money for himself. "By limiting me so strictly you will put it out of my power to acquire a livelihood, before I am so advanced in life as to lose a relish for the enjoyment of it."⁵

Despite this gloomy prediction the young man expanded his foothold in the town, bought nails to build a smokehouse in March 1759 and purchased three additional lots. Located on Fairfax Street, #14, 5 and 38 gave him control of the space between the market and the bank of the Occoquan. In this way he had direct access to the waterfront by June and could load hogsheads of tobacco directly onto flatboats to be carried to vessels offshore. During the spring Henderson had a flatt (raft) built which he named the Golgotha. John Ballendine provided 52½ feet of one-inch oak plank to five shillings, William Bayly 14 feet of "junk" lumber, and 31 yards of twilling were needed for a sail. Benjamin Grayson supplied the rudder and mast irons.⁶ The total cost was over £28, but by hiring the craft to Grayson, Ballendine, Wagener and other neighbors he was able in the first year of use to report that he had made up all but £1.5 of his investment.

A storehouse, stable and salt house were rented from Grayson from April 1759 to December 1761. These were possibly located on lot #3.⁷ Meanwhile construction began in July 1759 on a 16 feet by 25 feet house on lot #15.⁸ Some 8,200 nails of

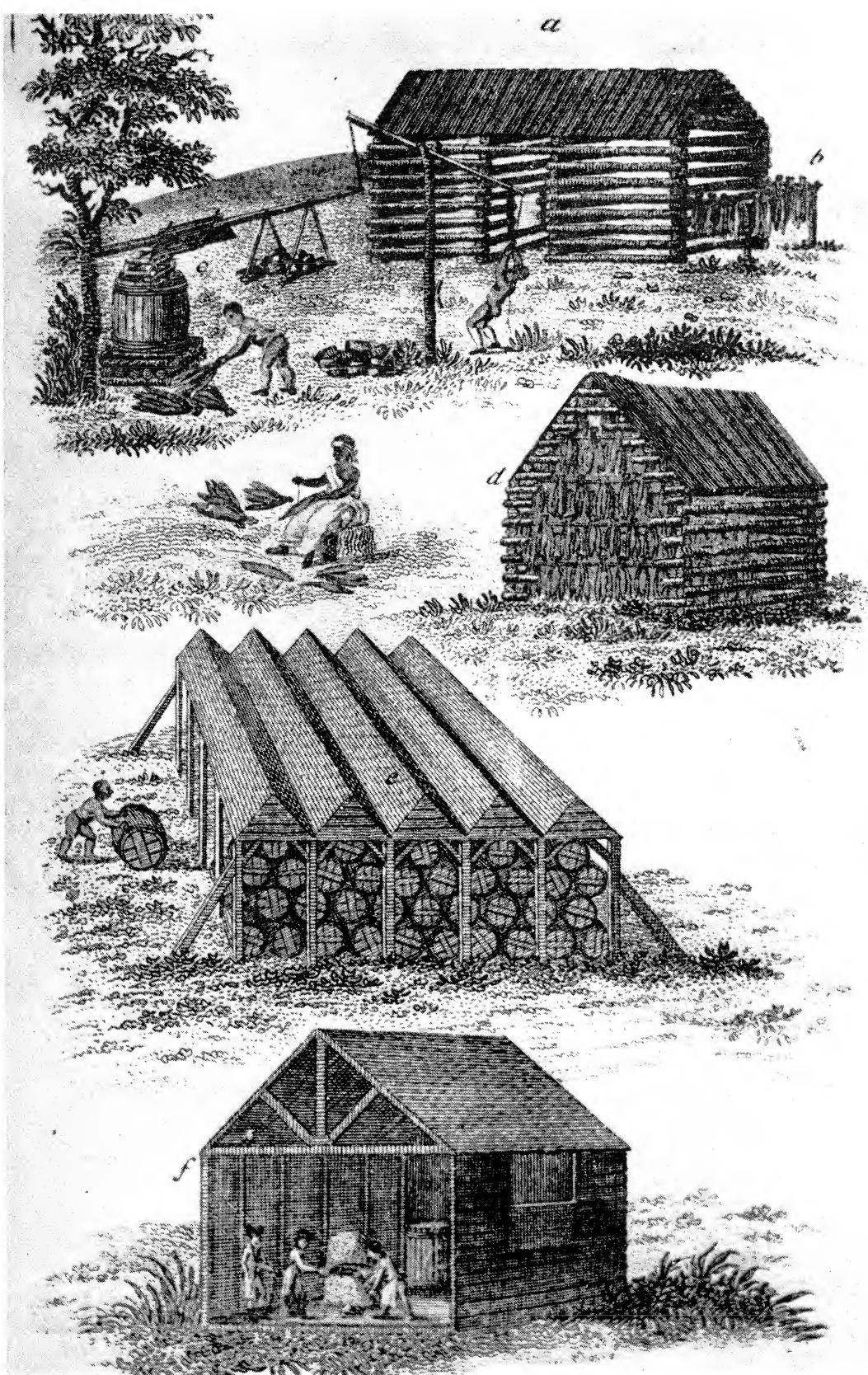


Figure 6. a. Common tobacco warehouse; b. tobacco hanging upon a scaffold; c. the operation of prizing; d. inside of tobacco house; e. outside of public warehouse; f. inside of public warehouse showing process of inspection. Etching by William Newman in William Tatham, An Historical and Practical Essay on the Culture and Commerce of Tobacco, 1800.

varied sizes cost £1.10.4; the thousand nails used for the fence were only five shillings, five pence. The following year he built a landing house and upper house, most likely on his Fairfax Street lots, leasing them back to Glassford & Company. The ledger entry for July 18, 1760 shows purchases of 393 feet of scantling, 1,297 bricks and 60 bushels of shells for mortar. One of the lots with kitchen and smokehouse was also rented to Glassford at £5 a month.

When autumn of 1760 arrived, Henderson was able to summarize his progress. In a little over two years in Colchester he had shipped back to his employer some four hundred hogsheads of tobacco on ships out of Norfolk, Quantico and Nanjemoy Creek in Maryland. He had traveled to Glassford's stores in Piscataway, Nanjemoy and Port Tobacco. Expenses for houses and housekeeping since the store began came to £54.7 and £21.0.8 was used for keeping servants. One of these was a boy four feet, one inch in height, whom he named Glasgow. The cost of living or boarding for the past 18 months ran to £114.10.03, while Henderson's wages for that year had risen to £50. On his personal trading account he had shipped 227 hogsheads of tobacco.⁹

A respectable number of pieces of household furniture had been acquired since June 15, 1759, all listed as Glassford & Company assets. Their value totalled £66. Included in the list were such kitchen items as a pine table, a brass mortar and pestle, a Dutch oven and an ironing table. There were a feather bed, a tent bed and a walnut bedstead and chest, while in the room which served as living quarters were such niceties as a square walnut tea-table from the Quantico store, six leather-bottom chairs purchased from Catesby Cocke (who in 1760 had leased his Belmont plantation on Mason Neck to Benjamin Grayson¹⁰) a writing desk, nine flag-bottom chairs, and a wooden safe made for Henderson by Jack, the negro carpenter.

Three and a half yards of printed cotton were made into curtains for three windows and there were two iron fireplace fenders. An oval walnut dining-table had come from the Quantico store. This list of tableware indicates that young Henderson was living in some degree of comfort:

stoneware plates	20 table knives and forks
1½ dozen tortoise shell plates	6 breakfast knives
9 pewter plates	6 pewter teaspoons
3 pewter dishes	6 pewter tablespoons
4 wineglasses	12 silver teaspoons ¹¹

That summer £420 in goods were ordered for the store, Henderson directing that the printed cottons should be "of good lively patterns and pretty large." Commenting on rugs that had been ordered but not received, he said that "disappointments of this kind make a man appear little in the eyes of his customers."¹² The balanced account for the store shows a total of £140.18.12 sterling, £1030.6.12½ in currency and 5039 lbs. of tobacco.¹³ His wages had risen from £15 in 1758 to £20 per year in 1759 and increased appreciably in 1760.

In October 1760, Alexander Henderson started out for Williamsburg in the hopes of meeting Glassford's partner, but was informed at Falmouth that the gentleman had left the country. The visitor had perhaps departed in one of the ships engaged in the

Potomac trade, among them the Triton, Catherine, Glassford, Nisbet, America, Nugent, Thistle, Hannah, Potomack, Fair American, Jeanie, Nellie, Henderson, George, Russell, Sally, Upton and Capell. Others mentioned in the 1761 ledgers were the King of Prussia, Esther & Mary, Friendship, Elizabeth and the Wilson. This last sailed from London and the John of Susannah came from Barbadoes with £173.11.3 worth of rum as a cargo.

The summer of 1761 found another assistant, Mr. Brice, living with Henderson; he had come out with Captain Hamilton. "I dare say," commented Henderson, "he will turn out to be a good assistant."¹⁴ He needed help¹⁵ to cope with such unsatisfactory merchandise as two copper coal scoops. "I never ordered them for they are an unsaleable article. I shall pack up and send to you on the first vessel from Quantico to the Clyde, I suppose some use may be made of them with you, there cannot be any here," complained the factor in a letter of April 20th. Trade in the store had not been extensive but no money had been lost. The copper coal scoops were sent back on the Henderson, which also carried 190 hogsheads of tobacco weighting 202,969 pounds.¹⁶

The black horse which had cost £23 currency died on November 13th when Henderson was in Port Tobacco. He had spent in 1760 £70 for horses and another £18 for their feed and hire. There were now two more servants to care for, the girl Celia and the man called Milford (he had cost £100). Another £25 was spent for their clothes, and 24 cords of wood had to be brought into town by wagon for fuel for the winter.

Requests sent back to Glasgow for goods were often accompanied by advice such as "The ribbons sent are ill chosen, particularly the figured ones which are too broad and most despicable patterns. It is therefore hoped that this will be prevented" or "The inhabitants of this country have large feet and must have large shoes - those sent out this year are much too small." Some comments were none too subtle. Asking in September 1762 to have his orders filled correctly if Glassford expected any profits, Henderson mentioned the arrival of Hector Ross as an agent of Dalzell, Oswald & Company,

You have a very potent advantage over other men in trade, namely this, that you are served by your factors in this country upon better terms, and here let me inform you that I have received an offer of £100 annually to open and keep a store at Quantico, beside other privileges commonly allowed to Glasgow factors.

Henderson also patiently requested a statement of his wages over the past five years. He had added to his capital by selling lot #15 to his rival Hector Ross for nearly ten times the amount it had originally cost and by renting the landing house to Glassford for £6 annually. His personal expenses were modest enough that he considered seven shillings, sixpence spent at "a most extravagant club at William Linton's ordinary"¹⁷ a height of indulgence.

In the spring of 1763 he had a storehouse built for the use of his clerk Mr. Bayne, and worried about local competition as his own stock of shirtings, felt hats and osnaburg grew low.

My next door neighbor is possessed of a complete assortment of goods - allow me to observe that the case being the same for two years successively is very hard on this Business which I think has been suffered for the want of proper and timely supplies of goods, in a very particular manner to languish, and I heartily wish that this may not soon be manifest.

By August the ship Jeanie sailed up the Potomac laden with some £1096 in merchandise that took eight days to unload, but the late arrival of the cargo meant that his customers had made their summer purchases elsewhere. When the Jeanie departed she carried Archibald Henderson back to Scotland.¹⁸ He was later made a partner and by 1766 the firm had become Glassford & Henderson.

A letter of complaint from Alexander went back with the ship, saying that the tardy goods were in disorder and that

Sundry packages have sustained damage; it has been a few days of five months from the time these goods were shipped at London until their arrival at Colchester for which two reasons may be given - the ship was put up in April but not having a sufficient quantity of convicts on board she might be detained till after another time of trial to receive more, which I do believe to be the case; the other reason is the ship being destined for Patapsco in Maryland, from which place or any other river a man can but seldom receive goods in a shorter time than he will from a Port of Clyde in a ship for this river. Goods on board Convict Ships are frequently damaged and more frequently pilfered. It is possible that the distemper which the convicts frequently carry from the Jails (and which is infectious and generally fatal to those who are seized by it) may be communicated by means of goods ... coming from on board an unclean ship ...¹⁹

Henderson concluded that his employer's reasons for sending the goods so late may have seemed logical but that the consequences at the Colchester store had been bad.

At the close of the winter, supplies were being bought for a new phase of construction. A thousand feet of one-inch plank, 324 feet of feather-edge plank, and a timber 24 feet long, 14 inches wide and 5½ inches thick were purchased in February and March. Another £2.3.4 was spent for 750 feet of refuse plank 13 feet long, while 93 bricks and 500 nails used up an extra £1.12.6. In April 1764, a horse rack was built. The structure may have been built on Henderson's lot #14, for when he sold it in 1767 to his future father-in-law the deed stated that Henderson was then living on this land. Alexander Henderson ordered 4,000 bricks in June 1764 and had his well framed the following month.²⁰ He may have been watching the new tobacco warehouses being built across the street from his new house. There are numerous charges in the ledger for materials during this same period. These buildings first planned for lots #6 and 42, were going up on #7 and 20; with the public wharf lying at the foot of Fairfax Street and the warehouses opposite him, Henderson was in a strategic location.

When he balanced his books at the end of the year the store showed transactions of £36.14.8 sterling, £4934.6.7½ in currency, and 8,437 lbs. of tobacco. He had shipped 143 hogsheads back to Scotland. Glassford & Company was charged for his

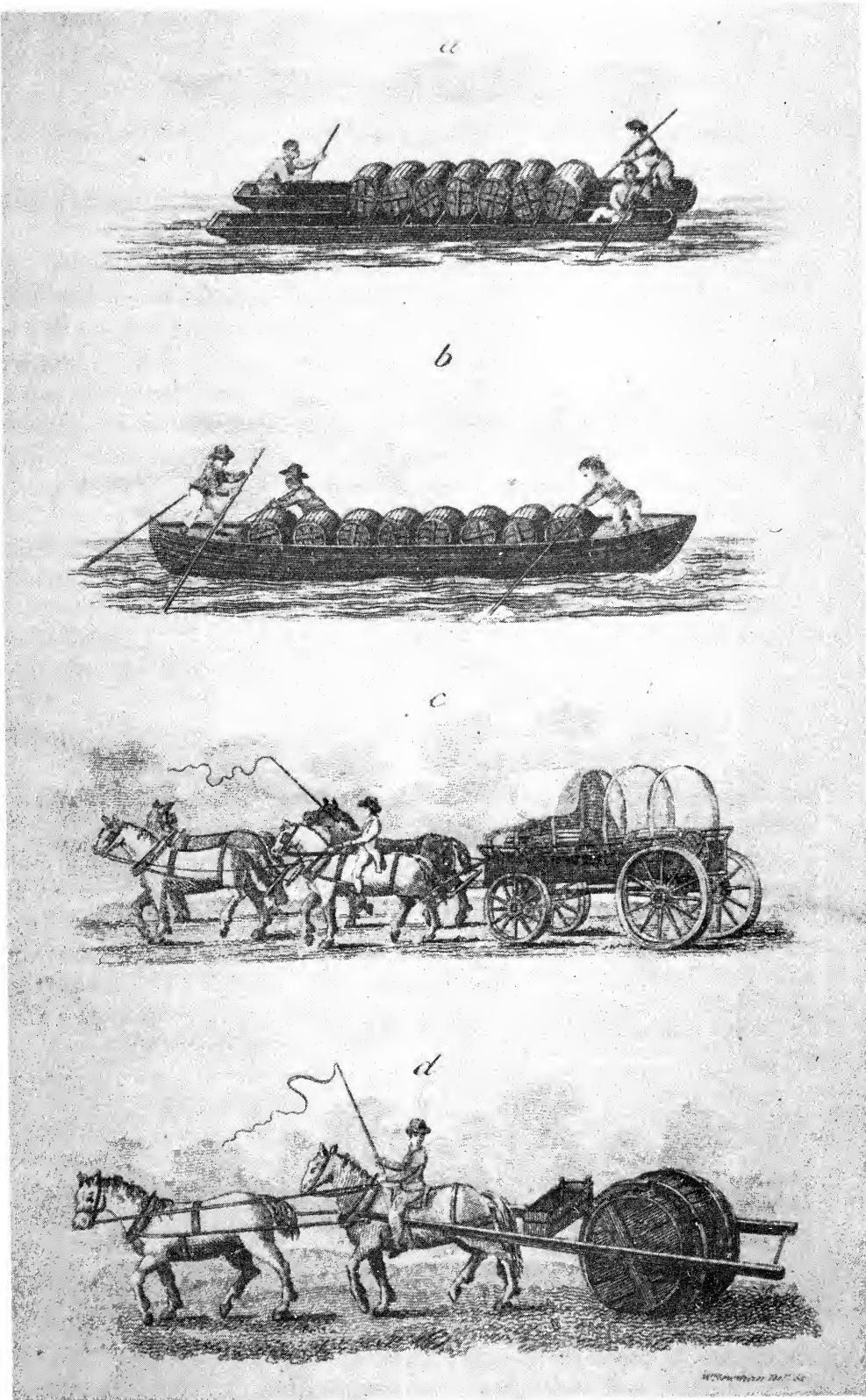


Figure 7. Conveyance of tobacco to market, in Virginia. Print by Newman in William Tatham, An Historical and Practical Essay on the Culture and Commerce of Tobacco, 1800. Virginia State Library.

£60 annual wage and for another £60 as rent of a dwelling, kitchen, dairy and smoke-house from November 1763, as well as a storehouse since April 1764.²¹

Sometime between 1763 and 1765 Henderson and Grayson entered into a transaction which cannot be identified because the deed was recorded in missing deedbook F. This purchase may have been located outside of Colchester, for during this period more customers were being drawn from Loudoun and Frederick Counties to the west. Those who were unknown were sponsored by someone with whom Henderson was acquainted, and they were so identified in his ledgers.²² Many of the new customers were noted as overseers on back country plantations; others were wagoners bringing corn and wheat from this region (crops which began to supplant the ubiquitous tobacco) down the road to the Occoquan.

For these men, as well as for their older customers, merchants such as Henderson and Hector Ross acted as brokers in all manner of transactions. They paid militia fees and county levies, traded in bills of exchange, and performed other services. Most were billed to the customers' account and only served to increase the debts owed to Glassford & Company. In 1765 some £800 appeared on the books in this fashion.

Actual cash came in a bewildering variety of coinage. When in June of that year Henderson sent a supply of currency to the Port Tobacco, Maryland, store, there were in it 130 dollars, 3 half guineas, 3 guineas, 27 doubloons and 8 English shillings. This mixed bag was worth £72.14 in Maryland currency.²³ The August cash shipment back from Port Tobacco included several pistoles.

Added to this bookkeeper's nightmare was the imposition of the Stamp Act. Henderson spent two shillings for a printed copy on July 20, 1765, foreseeing perhaps that this would only add to his difficulties in collecting back bills. Indeed between March and October the store took in more than £100 worth of goods by bartering. The assets of the store, including unpaid debts, amounted to £453.7.11½ sterling, £4987.11.9½ currency and 32,214 lbs. of tobacco. The store in turn owed £427.14.5½ sterling, £4897 in currency and 29,731 lbs. of tobacco. Listed as assets²⁴ were:

goods as per inventory.....	£1654.17.6
slaves valued at	£100
tobacco, 2850 lbs. @ 10/	£14.5.0
household furniture, cattle,	
provisions	£95.0.0
cash	£112.14.7
	£1903.2.10

As he balanced his books for the annual balance drawn up on September 29th (the Feast of St. Michael the Archangel), Henderson must have been uneasy over the effect which the Stamp Act would have upon the merchants along the Potomac. Passed by the British Parliament the previous February, this law requiring that tax stamps be used on all public documents was to be enforced beginning in November 1765. The opposition voiced in Patrick Henry's famous resolves was dramatized by the inhabitants of Dumfries when they set an effigy of the Stamp distributor on horseback with a halter tied around his neck, rode him backwards through the town striking the figure with

9. to be SOLD to the BIGGEST BIDDER,
by Decree of Fairfax County Court, on Tuesday
the Third of October next, at the Town of Col-
chester, in the said County,

SUNDRIES, Mortgaged to Messieurs HUGH BLACKBURN and Company, Merchants in GLASGOW, by BENJAMIN GRAYSON, Gent. of Fife County, and Foreclosed in Chancery, viz.

A Tract of LAND, in the County aforesaid, upon Ocracoke River, called BELMONT, containing about 1016 Acres, and lies within 2 Miles of Cedarville, and near 5 Saw-Mills, 2 Forges, a Furnace, and the best Grist-Mill on the Continent, the Situation extremely healthy and agreeable, with plenty of Fish and Fowl, an excellent Orchard of choice grafted Fruit, very fine Water from a Well, the Improvements valuable, such as a Brick House 26 by 18, two Rooms below and two above, a Wooden House 26 by 18, three Rooms below, with a Closets and good Cellar, a new Barn 40 by 20, well framed and covered with corr'd Shingles, a Kitchen, Dishes, Milk House, and Fish House: There is on the Land about 60 Acres of good Meadow, it abounds in Timber, in so plentifull a Manner, that there might be got at least 10,000 Pines of four feet long into Plank or Scadding, the above the Fishery is exceeding valuable, Fish have been caught in such Quantities that a ton 140 l. has been made in one season, by selling them at 3/5 by the Hundred, and 100 Dollars their in a good Year of 400 Dollars and 50 pounds, for Exportation. :

Also, Three DOTS in the Town of Goshen, which contain Tobacco Warehouses were largely burnt, number'd 6, 7, and 29. Also Five other DOTS, with the improvements, in the said Town of Goshen, number'd 13, 25, 37, 39, and 43. Also a Grist Mill on Peck's Run, and an engine, together with a Negro Below, in Blackfield, and

19. The *Journal of the Royal Society of the City of Liverpool* will be published on the 1st of January, 1850.

ANDREW BARRETT

Figure 8. Advertisement for sale of Benjamin Grayson's property. *Maryland Gazette*, August 1, 1765.

canes and whips, and burning it as a finale.²⁵

Viewing the example of fellow merchant Benjamin Grayson, whose Belmont plantation, eight lots in Colchester, grist mill on Pohick Creek and several servants had been put up at auction in August to pay debts due Hugh Blackburn & Company in Glasgow, Alexander Henderson could not have but wondered how similar colonial debts might affect his own firm. An observer in Glasgow, chronicling the events of that year, wrote of the refusal of colonial merchants to import British goods until the Stamp Act was repealed. "In America all was confusion Anarchy and Discontent - no trade no Court held and no Remittances coming home." The true reason for the repeal of the Act a few months later was, in his opinion, "the great sums owing by the Americans to Great Britain which made it improper to execute the law at that time ... the town of Glasgow was reckoned itself to having owing them in America near £1,000,000 sterling and one house, viz. Mr. Glassford had owing them upwards of £60,000."²⁶

Whatever his opinion on affairs of business, Henderson probably viewed his election to the vestry of Truro Parish with satisfaction. It solidified his standing in the community. The colonial vestry, sometimes called "the twelve lords of the parish," performed administrative duties beyond the purely religious. Responsible for the levying of tithes, for the care of the poor and for establishing property boundaries, their positions were a logical step toward the office of justice of the county court. Alexander Henderson became a vestryman in 1765. Three years later he was made a justice²⁷ and served in both positions for the next 20 years.

Being now referred to as "Gentleman" rather than simply "merchant" did not distract him from business affairs; he began to supply claret to the parish²⁸ for use during the communion service. He built a poultry house in November and in April 1766 he began construction of a flatt which would carry 36 hogsheads of tobacco. A breakdown of costs appeared in his ledger for £34.4.9 $\frac{1}{2}$.²⁹ The flatt hauled oyster shells, coal, tobacco, pig iron from the Occoquan furnace and freight between Glassford & Company's stores and their ships.

Although the 1766 balance was £200 lower than the previous year,³⁰ that for 1767 showed a substantial increase in the assets of the business. The goods, horses, and store equipment came to £2950, the flatt and its tender worth £59, but more importantly he had on hand tobacco worth some £815 and actually possessed £770 in cash.³¹

The month of September 1767 saw him selling his lot #14 to Henry Moore of Frederick County but leasing it back the following day.³² There were a store and stable on the lot. In 1759 the lot had cost Henderson £20. He sold it to Moore for £500. A fortnight before this profitable transaction, 1,600 feet of one-inch plank, 200 feet of 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ inch plank, 2,500 bricks and 4,000 shingles were purchased. Listed on the same page of his ledger³³ is a payment of £1 to architect William Buckland "for drawing a plan and estimate of a house some years past." Alexander Henderson may have been looking forward to this new dwelling when he bought from the executors of George Johnston's estate six prints with gilt frames.³⁴ They could have been among the dozen he had sold that attorney some years ago.

Building began that winter. The very volume of plank, scantling and laths purchased (some 1,200 feet as compared to the 400 required for the structure erected

in 1760) indicates that this was to be a substantial dwelling. The mortar required 80 bushels of oyster shells and 10 bushels of cow hair. Stonemasons Benoni and Duncan constructed two chimneys and a cellar. The windows used 66 squares of glass. Labor costs of £17.10 came to the equivalent of 20 months work by a single man, but they would be a drain on Henderson's salary of £100 annually.

While the new house was being built he and his clerks boarded with Henry Moore. Food purchased at this time shows that he was eating well. Oysters, wild duck and blue wings, crabs, venison, beef and pork are mentioned, as well as shad and whitefish in the springtime. At two week intervals Henderson used three quarts of molasses for making small beer. He also kept two cows and their calves at Moore's Colchester house.

Purchases made from the store by Henry Moore of fine flounced bonnets, girls' stays, and "colored kid mitts for Miss Sally" indicate that the food may not have been the main attraction for his boarders. Could Alexander have had this new resident in mind when importing these new models of "Ladys head dresses"?³⁵

The Fly Cap a la Greek	@ 4/
The Cockney	@ 7/
The two Scotch bonnets	@ 7/6
The Graceful	@ 8/6
The Advantage	@ 12/
The Arch Dutchess	@ 12/
The Delicate Air	@ 12/

In this busy year of 1768 the number of customers in Loudoun County increased, John Semple shipped 1,543 bars of iron back to Scotland on the ship Ann and another ship was being built for Glassford & Company. One Thomas Fleming used 232 tons of iron for the hull as he worked on the new "Jeanie" in Alexandria. Tar, pitch and turpentine were brought from Suffolk, while the "ship's head" and iron work for the windlass came from Philadelphia. James Connell did the carpenter work. The ship took 16 months to build and cost £1638.17.5.³⁶

Henderson made a trip to Philadelphia to inspect the newly-invented windlass and buy an electrical rod (lightning rod?) for the Dumfries store. He also purchased two maps, a pair of gloves, and some books for his personal use. September found him spending 68/9 for a ball in Alexandria³⁷ and he went to another one in that town in December. This time Hector Ross went with him to celebrate George Washington's reelection to the Virginia Assembly. Both men returned with the Colonel and spent the next day foxhunting at Mount Vernon.³⁸

Another journey was made in May 1769. He went to Philadelphia and New York to buy West Indian commodities and bring back currency in his saddlebags. The saddle, borrowed from Dr. Ross, was lost en route, replaced in Philadelphia, and finally located in Annapolis.³⁹ Lengthy accounts were kept with other merchants in Philadelphia and Norfolk and in closing his books at the end of September he listed 286 people in debt to the company, mostly in bonds or settlement transactions. Some £1200 was for currency, which he doubted would be repaid. Those debts termed "good"

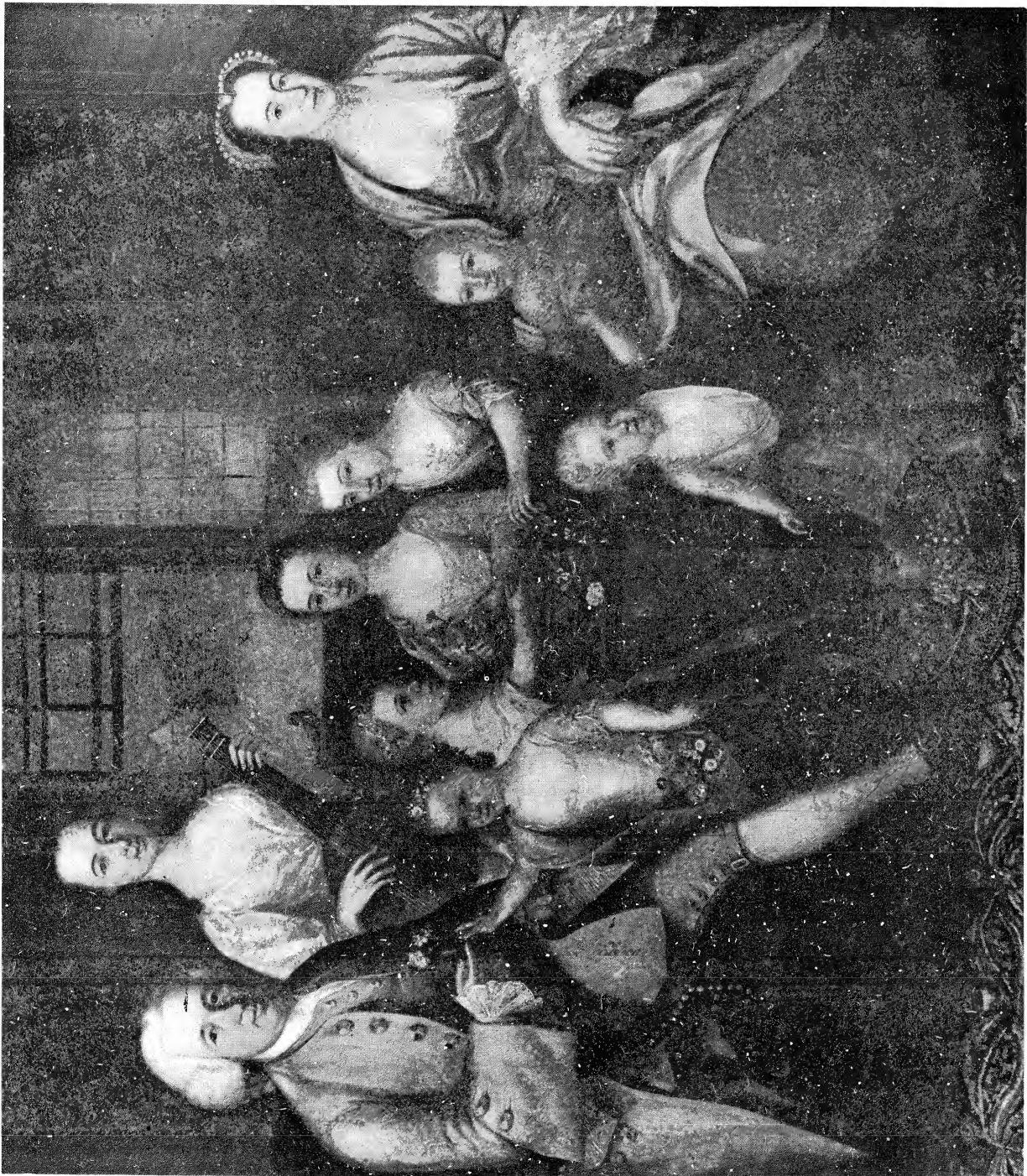


Figure 9. John Glassford and his family by McLaughlan. Courtesy of the Glasgow Art Gallery Museum, Scotland.

amounted to £814.6.8 sterling, £6962.9.11 in currency and 537 lbs. of tobacco. Glassford & Company (which had in 1766 become Glassford & Henderson) owed £199.13.6½ in sterling, £1033.3.2½ currency and 499 lbs. of tobacco. "In classing these several debts I have proceeded with my best judgment," Henderson wrote. "Certainty is not to be expected, in business of this sort it cannot be."⁴⁰

With these words written on April 6, 1770, the unbroken series of Colchester ledgers comes to an end. They are of importance not only for mercantile details such as these but also for their identification of customers' occupations and for information on the iron works at Occoquan or the growing significance of wheat and corn shipments from the back country in the west.

Because of the continuity supplied by the ledgers reaching an end at this time, Henderson's activities become more obscure. In the 1770's his property transactions picked up. He sold lots #5 and 38 to Glassford & Henderson (although they were escheated back to him as enemy property in 1781). Three months later (December 1772) he began acquiring lots at the intersection of Essex Street and Ox Road, purchasing #25 and 39 on the northeast corner. That these lots were unimproved is evident from the low price of £12. Henderson, undoubtedly cognizant of the fact that the Virginia Assembly had recently declared the road from the Occoquan to Williams Gap "one of the great roads" by which "great numbers of waggons came from the northwestern parts of the colony to the town ... of Colchester," bought three adjacent lots the following August. These formed the #19-21-23 complex upon which the tavern now known as the Fairfax Arms was situated. Hector Ross bought these when Henderson bought the two corner lots.⁴¹

There was a major event in his personal life as well. On January 7, 1773, he and Henry Moore's second daughter signed a marriage contract. Two tracts of land and seven African slaves were put in a trust to provide her with £125 Virginia money if she outlived her husband. Sally Moore has been described by one writer as "a witty beauty with red hair who loved to sing." George Washington mentioned the marriage, although his opinion of her beauty was more restrained, saying in a letter, "Mentioning of one wedding puts me in mind of another, tho of less dignity. This is the marriage of Mr. Henderson of Colchester to a Miss More (of the same place), remarkable for a very frizzled head, and good singing, the latter of which I shall presume it was that capitivated our merchant."⁴²

Besides her hair and her voice Sally Moore brought with her into marriage two slaves. A poignant note from her father⁴³ accompanied this dowry:

Sir: I have given you my daughter in marriage - I now give you mulatto Ann and her daughter Dorchas for slaves (horrid word) as its the greatest part I can now give you, or perhaps may ever have in my power to give. I am in hopes Sally will endeavor to make up the deficiency-

Henry Moore

The town in which the newlyweds lived was prosperous during this period before the Revolution. More space was needed for storing tobacco and lot #8 was added to the warehouse area in 1772.⁴⁴ Although Henderson, Ross, and Wagener each acquired one

of the three remaining waterfront lots south of the enlarged area, they realized that the commercial center of gravity had shifted to the crossroads. As wagon trade from the west increased the wear and tear upon Ox Road made that thoroughfare almost impassable. The Assembly levied an annual sum for the repair of the public roads leading to Alexandria and Colchester, naming Henderson as one of the trustees.⁴⁵

Across Essex Street from his holdings, his father-in-law bought #22, 24 and 40, Peter Wagener, Jr., bought #37, easternmost lot on Fairfax Street, on the same day that Henderson got the two (#30, 32) next to him. These latter sales in 1775 marked the last lots sold by the Trustees of Colchester, although in 1788 they reconfirmed the sale which they had made in 1771 to Peter Wagener, Sr., of five scattered lots.⁴⁶ While this final flurry of sales was in progress Henderson also bought from Wagener the 2½ acre strip running behind his #19-39 tier of lots north of Essex Street.

An order had gone out from the County Court on July 22, 1773, to have the town resurveyed and the lots again laid off. This survey, if made at all, has disappeared from the county records but a verbal description of Colchester at this time appeared in a Philadelphia newspaper:

I was ferried over the Occoquan, a deep and capacious stream with romantic surroundings and pleasant prospects, where a town has been projected and chartered and called Colchester. It is beautifully situated in a fine region, has wide streets with an ample market space and substantial landings. Numerous houses have been built, some of them quite elegant, and vessels from Europe often come into the docks with cargoes of broadcloths, kersies, duffelds, cottons, crapes, rugs, blankets, Norwich stuffs, linens, furniture, wearing apparel, calicos, Persians, Taffaties, and other East India silks, Holland sheetings, wines, spices, coffee, tea, sugars, tropic fruits, axes, locks, hinges, nails, carpenters' joiners' and smiths' tools, fire arms, anchors, and all other supplies needed for a new and thriving settlement. These ships take back with them tobacco, Indian corn, wheat, flour, pork, hemp, masts, staves, boards, walnut planks, iron ore and furs. Imported commodities are sent coastwise in shallops and other small sailing craft to many other points on the tidewater, and a large trade in all kinds of provisions is kept with remote posts on the frontiers and over the mountains by the two great wagon roads to Williams and Vestals gaps on the Shenandoah.⁴⁷

As these last years of peace drew to an end the residents of Colchester heard through the pages of the Maryland Gazette (to which Henderson subscribed) of the six "elegant pieces of Music" being published by Charles Leonard in Alexandria or of the invention of "the so long sought for perpetual motion machine" by a man in Dumfries, Scotland. Because Alexandria had no paper of its own until 1784, nor Dumfries until 1791, the closest source of news was Annapolis. Interspersed with worsening news of the relationship between Great Britain and the American colonies could be found an occasional intriguing item such as that of the strange demise of the Maryland proprietary agent who died in Bermuda of the "flying gout." "This unfortunate gentleman," commented the Gazette, "had an entreprizing temper the sallies of which, even when he was on the brink of the grave, often filled his friends with Astonishment."⁴⁸

The Tobacco Warehouses

In May 1761, a petition was presented to the county court asking that the public warehouse be moved from Occoquan to Colchester. Enabling legislation was passed by the Assembly in November 1762, stating that the old warehouse be discontinued by March 10, 1763. The new building was to be large enough to hold one-half the number of hogsheads inspected during the present year at Occoquan. The Act directed that the new facility be built on lots #6, 29 and 42, owned by merchant Benjamin Grayson.

The inspector at Colchester was to receive 40 pounds of tobacco (two-thirds of the amount given at Quantico warehouse) and the proprietor would be paid a fee of eightpence for each hogshead inspected. From October 1st to the following August the inspector was required to be in attendance at the warehouse in order to deliver the tobacco for export, Sundays and holidays excepted. Annual accounts were to be presented at the county court in September or October.⁴⁹

Tobacco notes of transfer issued at the new warehouse were legal tender for paying levies, quitrents and officers' fees in Fairfax, Fauquier and Prince William County. Edward Washington, who had been inspector at Occoquan as early as May 1749, was appointed to serve in that capacity by the April, 1763 session of the Fairfax court.

The major role that Maryland and Virginia tobacco played in the world market did not come about because of the superiority of the soil in the Chesapeake Bay region. Tobacco could be grown elsewhere in the colonies. It was the network of natural waterways, the many rivers and creeks emptying into the bay, which made the area so well suited for easy transport of the tobacco crop to outgoing ships. Until 1730, in Virginia (and 1747 in Maryland) no public warehouses were established. British ships picked up tobacco from individual planters' warehouses or wharves along the rivers.

It was the responsibility of the ship's master to have the tobacco loaded on board. At times this might involve only the distance from the landing to the ship, but as tobacco became cultivated in fields inland from tidewater the seamen often had to roll the casks a mile or more to the landing. The hogsheads were about four feet in height, weighed nearly half a ton, and had a diameter of 2½ feet at the head.⁵⁰

As production increased in the Chesapeake colonies from 20,000,000 pounds at the close of the seventeenth century to 100,000,000 by 1775, the earlier custom of loading hogsheads from individual landings became impractical. To the sailors involved the labor was unpopular. In order to alleviate this situation public warehouses were established at designated points along the creeks and rivers at the uppermost places on navigable water. For this reason the first Occoquan warehouse stood just below the fall line in order to lessen the distance that the tobacco must be transported overland. An additional advantage of processing by means of a warehouse was a better control of the quality of tobacco exported.

The Act of 1730 ordered that the inspector open each hogshead, remove and burn the trash, reprise or compress the remainder and nail the lid back on. The cask was then branded with the name of the warehouse and the net weight. A receipt was given the owner which listed his hogsheads by number and individual mark, recorded the gross

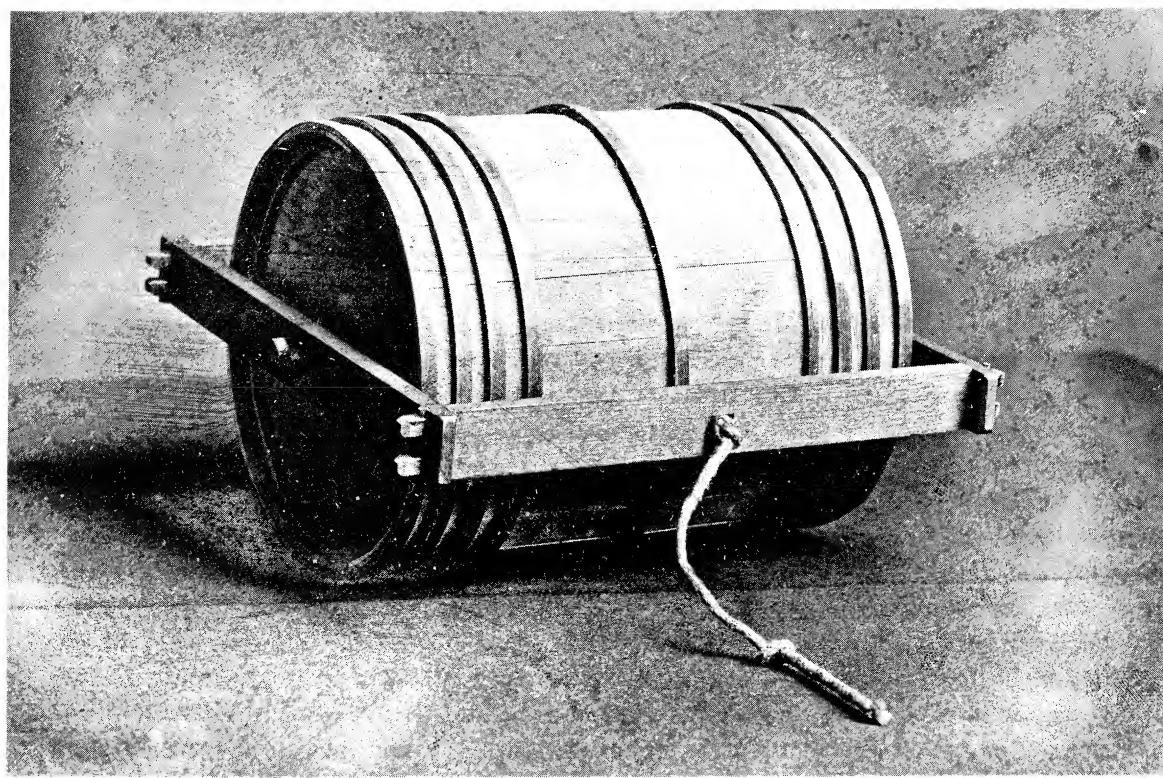


Figure 10. Tobacco hogshead. Smithsonian Institute.



Figure 11. Tobacco being prepared for shipment. Virginia State Library.

and net weight, and whether the tobacco was stem or leaf, sweet-scented or Oronoco. These "crop notes" were negotiable. When the tobacco was to be exported the owner gave the note to the ship's captain, who picked up the casks from the public warehouse.⁵¹

After the ship reached Great Britain the consignee had the cargo unloaded, paid the duty, took the hogsheads to the warehouse, sorted the tobacco leaf and sold it, taking 3% of the sale price as his commission. The two shilling duty per hogshead yielded £6000 annually for the colony of Virginia between 1758 and 1762.⁵²

When the new warehouse was set up in Colchester the lots mentioned in the Act provided to unsuitable "from the inconvenience of their situation." The structure was built on lots #7 and 29, therefore, rather than on #6 and 42.⁵³ All these lots were owned by Benjamin Grayson. Materials used including 1,870 feet of scantling, 2,574 feet of laths and 839 feet of 3/4 inch pine plank at a total cost of £20.16.3. Another item was 5,500 twenty-penny nails, 500 ten-penny nails, and some 12,000 nails of assorted sizes. These materials were listed in Henderson's ledger for December 1764.⁵⁴

The weights at the warehouse were adjusted in 1768⁵⁵ under the direction of county justices Henderson and McCarty. Henderson was ordered to import a beam for the scale in May 1769 and in March 1771 William Bayly (the proprietor) was ordered to build a brick funnel to burn the trash tobacco. That year in August the court ordered the warehouse enlarged. The inspector asked the proprietor to build a house capable of holding 420 hogsheads, as there was no room in the present building. No dimensions were given. The inspector's salary was raised to 50 pounds in February 1772, and lot #8 was added to the warehouses on which to erect additional buildings.⁵⁶

The cost of having one hogshead built was three shillings in 1765, and it could cost 16 shillings or more to transport a wagonload to Colchester. Charges for inspection of seven hogsheads, in one case, were 10/6.⁵⁷ Both inspectors had to be present at the warehouse, for William Bayly almost lost his position when he was sued for having conducted the inspection alone.⁵⁸

Because the Fairfax Court Order Books are missing for the years 1774 to 1783 there are few details concerning the tobacco market during this time. George Mason remarked in 1775 on the scarcity of tobacco plants, saying that the shortage was more severe than in the season of 1758. In April 1777 he wrote that there was smallpox at almost every tobacco warehouse, and that the price was but 25 shillings a cask. Mason also remarked that Captain Riggs ship was loading two or three hundred barrels of flour from Colchester.⁵⁹ John Regan and Edward Washington, Jr., were inspectors.⁶⁰

William Bayly tried to sell the warehouse lots in 1777, advertising them in the Virginia Gazette in December. His daughter Ann inherited them and was the proprietor in August, 1783 when the county court ordered that repairs be made.⁶¹ The first inspectors appointed in 1782, when records were begun by the state of Virginia, were Edward Washington and Robert Boggess. Their assistant was William Donaldson.⁶²

The inspectors were required to submit an annual accounting to the Treasurer of Virginia showing the expense of each warehouse, the number of hogsheads processed, and the amount of the tax. These records of the Auditors' Office are at the Virginia State Library, filed under the name of the individual warehouse. A few samples of the Colchester accounts indicate that from May 1781 to May 1783 the Treasurer received £282 in revenue. The tax was five shillings per hogshead. Between May and

October 1783 volume increased and rose for 1784-1785 to a total of £34.12.18.⁶³

In order to provide for the immediate functioning of the new government after the war, enabling legislation had been passed in November 1781 stating that money, tobacco and other commodities such as flour and hemp could be borrowed.⁶⁴ An agent was appointed in September 1782 to dispose of government stores of tobacco. He was instructed to ask no less than 16/8 per hundredweight for that stored on the Potomac at Colchester, Alexandria and Dumfries. By November the minimum price had risen to 20 shillings for Potomac tobacco. The Treasurer was to deliver nearly 145,000 pounds of that commodity kept there and on the Rappahannock River to the credit of Simon Nathan, a Philadelphia merchant. At the end of the year the Agent of Commutables was to pay the United States \$25,000 in tobacco from Virginia warehouses.⁶⁵ One such payment, made in 1787, shows that Colchester warehouse paid £251.8.0 "To Raise a supply of Money for the United States in Congress Assembled."

There were in 1780,73 public warehouses in Virginia, of which 15 were on the Potomac and Wicomico Rivers. From these two rivers 9,500 hogsheads were shipped that year, yet they stood third in production: the Rappahannock River warehouses exported 15,000 and the James River and its branches 25,000 hogsheads. Virginia tobacco that year totalled 57,000 hogsheads, slightly more than a 1766 estimate of 50,000⁶⁶ exported from Virginia and 30,000 from Maryland.⁶⁷

The lesser production from the Potomac reflected the shift in that area from tobacco to wheat. As this trend increased and less tobacco passed through the warehouses, the time arrived when revenues were barely enough to meet the salaries of the inspectors. In Alexandria, for instance, two of the warehouses were surplus in 1793 and rented out until December 1795. They were then discontinued, although legislation was passed in 1799 to revive inspection for the town. At that time Fairfax County and Alexandria were to share one inspection station; the location was not given. Warehouses in Falmouth and Dumfries were discontinued in 1793. The tobacco remaining at Dumfries was to be sent to Quantico warehouse, probably located closer to the Potomac in an effort to overcome the silting of Quantico Creek.⁶⁸ Records in the Virginia Archives indicate that the warehouse at Aquia was in use until 1809 and that Quantico continued until 1811.⁶⁹

As early as 1788 George Mason had complained of the inferior yield:

The crop of tobacco this year in Virginia is a common one, neither very great or small - the Quality bad, and I think the price in our Country will be rather low; not more than eighteen or twenty shillings Virginia Currency per hundred on Potomac.⁷⁰

Five years later one of the inspectors at Colchester stated that only 274 hogsheads had been received in the preceding year, that the Alexandria warehouse contained 148 hogsheads although its capacity was 2,500. At Colchester the gates were down and some of the fence posts were missing.⁷¹

Judging by the absence of inspectors' bonds in the Fairfax County Deedbooks, and by the lack of accounts in the Auditor's records in Richmond, it may be concluded that the tobacco warehouse in Colchester was discontinued after 1805.⁷²

Flour Inspection

Flour was also one of the commodities which was requisitioned by the State of Virginia in 1781 to obtain cash for the use of the Federal government. Inspectors were appointed in both Alexandria and Fredericksburg, but "for the convenience of millers and shippers who live inconvenient to public inspection" the towns of Dumfries and Colchester were also assigned inspectors. Barrels were required to have 12 hoops and to contain 196-204 pounds. In order to earn his 2¢ fee on each barrel the inspector examined it, marked the name of the miller, the place where it was inspected and the quality of the flour on the exterior.⁷³

These directions differed only slightly from the ones in force since 1762. The earlier law paid the inspector a penny more and required him to have a stamp made which gave the first letter of his county name, a V for Virginia, the first letter of his own Christian name and his whole surname. Additional information on the barrel included its weight and whether the flour was of first or second fineness. A warning against mixing meal, Indian corn or peas in with the flour was part of the law.⁷⁴

The cultivation of wheat was brought into the Valley of Virginia by settlers from Pennsylvania and spread into Loudoun and Fauquier Counties by 1760.⁷⁵ Two years later Benjamin Grayson of Colchester and John Baillendine of Occoquan became partners in a bakery and wheat-manufacturing⁷⁶ operation located near the falls. Henderson's ledgers mention large quantities of bread purchased by the ships in port at Colchester. In August 1764 the Jeanie loaded 1,495 loaves, for which her captain paid £11.4.4. The bread was sometimes packed in linen bags to be carried to the ships.⁷⁷ In 1765 the Jeanie bought 867 ship's bread in March, the Ann got 850 in August, and in October 1,002 more at 12/6 were loaded on board the Jeanie.⁷⁸

Henderson kept a "Wheat Account" between October, 1767 and April 1768; during this time he handled 238½ bushels. Most of this went to John Semple, who ran the mills at Occoquan.⁷⁹ Many of Henderson's customers had the notation "waggoner" after their names.

Although the wagon traffic generated by the wheat trade was an important part of Colchester's economy, the milling and bakery operations took place upstream and are not a direct part of the story of the town itself.

The Vineyard

Across from the market place, lots #18 and 26 were the location of the vineyard planted by Morris (Maurice) Pound, a native of Germany. He began his venture about 1756. Two dry summers impeded the growth of his grapes. Concluding that he could only succeed in his enterprise by obtaining enough capital to make the required improvements on his lots, Pound went to George Mason for advice.

He had already built a structure conforming to the minimum 20 foot square size on one of his lots; now he needed backing to build a winepress and get needed equipment. Failure to make the necessary construction on the other lot would result in the loss of his title to the property. Morris Pound told Mason that he proposed mortgaging the land to a group who would supply the needed capital. Mason, knowing that this

was an "honest, industrious man" who had put a great deal of work into his vineyard, and believing that he could succeed, enlisted the aid of the Graysons, George Washington, Daniel French, Reverend Green and George William Fairfax. These gentlemen subscribed £118 and a loan agreement was drawn up.⁸⁰

Grayson and Green held the mortgage.⁸¹ Lot #18 was deeded to Grayson in 1762 by the trustees of Colchester, which would indicate that the enterprise did not succeed.⁸² When Grayson's assets were taken over by creditors in 1765 #18 was again for sale.⁸³ As Pound and his heirs later paid taxes on both lots from 1782 to 1799 they must have regained control, although no deed is indexed under Pound's name.

There remains of his dream only the name of the street which fronted Pound's property (Wine Street); like other efforts in Virginia to develop vineyards this attempt failed. In 1760 an Act was passed to encourage arts and manufactures in the colony, which offered a premium of £500 for the best wine produced. The yield had to be at least ten hogsheads.⁸⁴ Subscriptions were collected to make up this amount and William Ellzey, a Colchester trustee, contributed £2 but the soil and climate of Virginia was not conducive for cultivating vineyards.

The Taverns

Nor on the Sabbath day suffer any person to tipple or drink more than is necessary.

Hening, Statutes, VI, 74

The sale of various liquors, and other matters pertaining to "good, wholesome and cleanly lodging and diet," were closely regulated. Prices were set by the county court twice a year for rum, claret, red and white wine, English strong beer or porter, Virginia beer and cider. In 1763 a "hot diet with small beer or cider" cost one shilling, threepence. For a cold meal, one shilling would suffice.⁸⁵ Rates were to be posted in a public room and "be placed not more than six feet above the floor,"⁸⁶ an indication that the price list was often posted in a remote spot.

The keeper of an ordinary was licensed and bonded annually. He could not sell to sailors on credit, though "all soldiers on his majesties service paying ready money for liquor shall have one fifth part deducted."⁸⁷ Illegal gambling was frowned upon: cards, dice or billiards were not to be used in the tavern, its outbuildings, or under the bushes.⁸⁸ Should the innkeeper fail to furnish the court with the names of violators, his license could be revoked.

Overcharging was punished by a fine. If there were no clean sheets on the bed, the six shillings for lodging could not be collected. As if these rules were not enough, the court often appointed an inspector of ordinaries to guard further against misdemeanors. Were one to judge by the number of violations - 25 men presented at one session of the county court for selling liquor without a license - it would seem that the inspector must have been a busy man.⁸⁹

The term "ordinary" referred to an eating house where meals were served to all customers at a fixed price. Nicholas Cresswell, an English traveler, explained their function:

Breakfasted at . . . a Public House, but in this Country called Ordinaries, and indeed they have not their name for nothing, for they are ordinary enough. Have had either Bacon or Chickens every meals since I came into the Country. If I continue in this way shall be grown over with Bristles or Feathers.⁹⁰

The first mention of a license granted for a tavern in the town of Colchester was that obtained by Charles Tyler in January 1757. Court order books of the early years of Fairfax County are incomplete, however, and it is probable that there had been an ordinary at the landing long before Tyler arrived. At ports and ferries where travelers often had to wait for good weather or for cargo to be landed there was usually more than one ordinary. George Mason's ferry was frequently delayed by bad weather, so that at one time or another most of the inhabitants applied for licenses. Without a license, no charge could be made for food. Virginians could not afford free hospitality toward strangers who might be forced to stay for several days.

Charles Tyler operated the Colchester Tavern, owned by Peter Wagener and probably located on lot #1/36. Subsequent advertisements referred to it as the tavern "at the waterside."⁹¹ Tyler bought provisions from Henderson's store, using large quantities of barley, corn, flour and rum. Luxuries such as nuts were purchased by the half-ounce, flour by the hundredweight.⁹² Ducks, geese, turkeys, venison and partridge implemented the diet of chicken and pork.

In October 1759 Alexander Henderson's ledgers show that four chairs, a Dutch oven, and a box iron with heaters were obtained for the tavern. Tyler also needed a teapot, a blue and white mug, six flat pewter plates, a quart bowl and a supply of wine glasses, tumblers, and a gross of corks. These were a heavily used commodity: Tyler bought half a gross on October 11, 1760, another half gross on November 11th, a gross on the 20th and another half a month later. As rum was imported in 119-gallon hogsheads and decanted into smaller containers, vast quantities of corks were needed.⁹³

The Colchester Tavern did not enjoy a lengthy monopoly. William Bayly was licensed to operate an ordinary in his house in 1758, Elizabeth Fallon in 1759, and William Linton in 1761. The most prominent seems to have been Wagener's, however, advertised in 1762 as that "commodious and well accustomed tavern, with convenient, out houses, situate at the ferry landing at the town of Colchester, on the Post Road between Alexandria and Fredericksburg."⁹⁴

After Charles Tyler's death about 1768 the tavern was operated by William Courts, who had moved across the Potomac from Charles County the previous year to operate the ferry running between Hallowing Point on Mason Neck and the Maryland shore. Courts obtained a tavern license in October 1769 and renewed it in 1770 and 1773. "Dined at Courts in Colchester," wrote George Washington in 1771, "and went to Dumfries afterwards and to the play of the Recruiting Officer."⁹⁵

In 1775 Charles Tyler (perhaps a son of the previous tavernkeeper) stated his intention to taking over the management:

Acquia. - I intend to move on September 25 from where I now live to Colchester. I propose to open tavern in the house formerly kept by Mr. Courts, known by the name of the Stonehouse. Many additions have been added to this house of late, which now makes it very convenient for travellers...⁹⁶

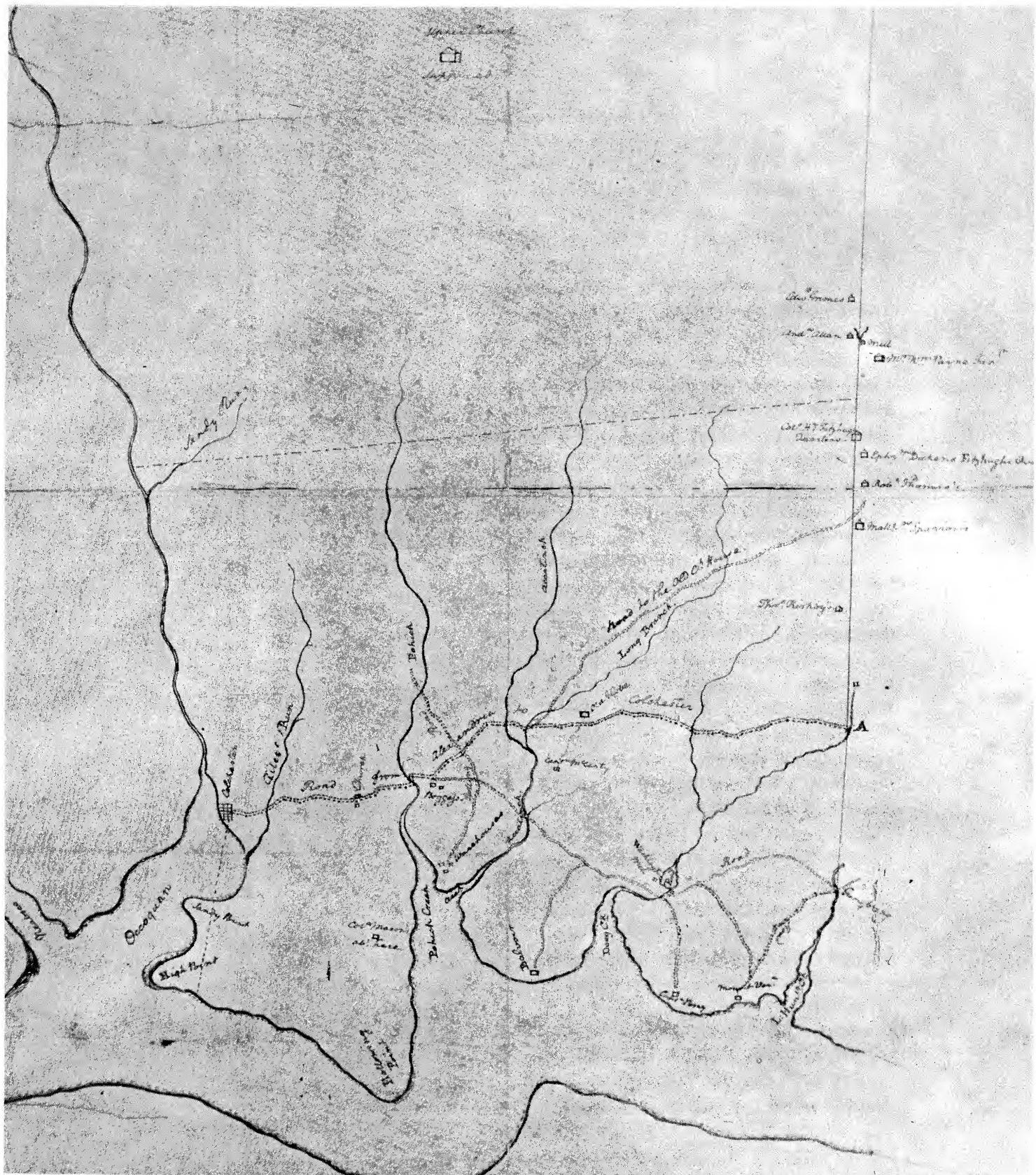


Figure 12. Excerpt from George Washington's sketch of roads and country between Little Hunting Creek and Colchester c. 1768. Mount Vernon Ladies' Association of the Union Annual Report, 1964. Mount Vernon, Virginia.

If Courts did, as this notice implies, depart from the Stonehouse, he was back in business in 1784 when J.F.D. Smyth visited the town. "If the accommodations were good at Dumfries," Smyth complained, "they were proportionately bad at Colchester at a house kept by one Coates, whom we found to be equally disagreeable with the entertainment we had met with."⁹⁷

Tavernkeepers, like their modern counterparts, moved from one hostelry to another as the opportunity offered. In 1792 William Ward, who ran the tavern at Princess and Union Street in Alexandria, advertised in the Dumfries newspaper that he

begs leave to inform his old friends and the public in general, that he has removed from Alexandria to Colchester, where he has opened tavern in that commodious House on the waterside for many years occupied as an INN. And being supplied with wines and liquor of the first qualities, and every other necessary article for the accommodation of travellers, he solicits a continuance of those favors with which he was honoured before his removal.⁹⁸

"The Stone House" was mentioned in the will of Peter Wagener and was bequeathed to his son Peter in 1798. When offered for rent by the executors of the estate, the tavern was described as "that noted stand, the Stone Ordinary."⁹⁹ No further reference to this establishment appeared in the Alexandria paper (up through 1816) and it is not known how long this tavern continued to function.

Another Colchester inn was in operation in 1761, kept by William Linton. He rented lot #23 from Benjamin Grayson. Together with two acres adjacent to the town purchased from Travers Waugh, Linton's holdings were known as "Linton's Inclosure" and may have included the structure known today as the Fairfax Arms. The complex of Grayson's three lots (#19, 21, 23) was advertised in 1767 as containing "a dwelling house suitable for an ordinary."¹⁰⁰

Linton bought iron candlesticks and sugar from Henderson's store in July 1761 but the bulk of his purchases probably came from Grayson, his landlord. Linton's tavern was the meeting place of a club. Henderson recorded on one occasion the expenditure of two shillings, sixpence for two bowls of toddy. Perhaps this was the tavern described in a letter which appeared in a Philadelphia paper about that time after a visit to Colchester:

I dined at the Essex House, a commodious tavern or ordinary near the ferry, built partly of stone and partly of wood, with great outside chimneys of stone having capacious fireplaces. The dinner was of smoking venison and fish taken from wood and water that morning, and supplemented with tempting cakes of maize and a pitcher of excellent cider. The rate was one shilling and sixpence which I did not demur at for so good a repast.¹⁰¹

Linton apparently was still in business in 1769, for on May 15th he was brought into court for selling liquor without having license.

The property, after owner Benjamin Grayson became an insolvent debtor, passed into the hands of his creditors. It was bought in 1772 by the merchant Hector Ross and

sold again the following year to Alexander Henderson. These Lots (#19, 21, 23) occupied by Henderson had "a good dwelling, storehouse, and all convenient stores"¹⁰² and were held by him for six years. He also owned the adjacent lots #25 and 39, as well as a strip running behind the five parcels. With these holdings Henderson controlled the northwest corner of the intersection of the Ox Road (Route #611) and Essex Street (Route #825, or Colchester Road).

Between 1779 and 1811 Captain William Thompson and his wife owned the group of lots. His advertisement in the Virginia Journal & Alexandria Advertiser on July 15, 1784, described the buildings in this fashion:

A large and convenient dwelling with excellent cellar, four rooms on a floor with a fireplace to each, and three rooms above. Good kitchen with oven adjacent to the fireplace, a room at one end with a planked floor, lathed and plastered, glass windows, was intended for a housekeeper or white servant; stable for eight horses and a meathouse, garden, and about one acre adjacent in grass, well inclosed. Also a convenient storehouse and counting room, with good cellar. Cash, tobacco, or bills of exchange taken in payment.

Again, these lines fit the physical appearance of the surviving structure owned by the Duncan family. There was no sale in 1784.

Through a circumstance unfortunate for William Thompson but a boon to present historians, many of the furnishings were mortgaged in order to meet security on a bond in 1799.¹⁰³ The deed to Lawrence Washington of Belmont, who was Mrs. Thompson's uncle, includes a comprehensive list of the contents of a tavern of this period and of the livestock in its outbuildings:

13	beds	4	brass candlesticks
11	bedsteads	4	finv candlesticks
25	blankets	1	spinning wheels and 2 pairs cards
3	suits of curtains	1	desk
23	pair sheets	1	chest of drawers
8	bedquilts	9	tables
9	callico counterpains	5	looking glasses
7	homespun counterpains	24	setting chairs
18	pillow cases	3	carpets
1	mattrass	6	trunks
6	pewter basons	1	spyglass
1	pewter bedpan	3	earthen pans
26	towels	25	stone potts
19	tablecloths	12	stone juggs
12	silver tablespoons	3	pairs tongs and shovels
26	silver teaspoons	3	pairs handirons
18	knives and forks	6	tin cannisters
8	dozen plates	1	tin kettle
3	tureens	6	japan'd waiters

2	dozen dishes	9	potts
12	bowls	6	pair pothooks
8	muggs	3	flesh forks
4	tinn panns	1	ladle and skimmer
8	tinn plates	3	iron spoons
3	dozen tea cups and saucers	2	tea kettles
9	coffee cups	1	griddle and gridiron
2	tea pots	3	frying pans
4	coffee pots	1	shovel and 2 pairs tongs
4	sauce boats	1	brass skillet and brass mortar
9	salts-rimm and castors	1	pair wareful irons
8	decanters	6	flatt irons
12	tumblers	6	racks and hangers
18	wine glasses	2	iron basons and cullenders
1	riding chair	1	egg slice
1	horse	1	fish kettle and 2 ovens
3	cows and 2 yearlings	1	small rowboat

After Thompson died, Zachariah Ward operated the tavern in 1800. When it was offered for rent, the advertisement praised the structure as "an eligible stand for a tavern, and ... remarkable for its beauty and healthful situation."¹⁰⁴ In 1802 Mrs. Thompson referred to "that well known property in the town of Colchester occupied for many years as a tavern and now in possesion of Dr. Blake."¹⁰⁵ When Thompson's estate was settled in 1811 lot #21 and 23 were sold to Peter Wagener (grandson of the founder of the town) and remained in that family until 1833.

One other tavern name was that of the Castle Inn, opened by John Brown. In his sole advertisement in the Alexandria paper, on November 30, 1786, he noted that he also operated the ferry. William Millan was the last known host of the tavern at the ferry; his announcement appeared on July 1, 1809.

Other tavern licenses granted for Colchester and so listed in the Fairfax County Court Order Books, were those of William McDaniels in 1772, William Lindsay in 1785, and John Brown and Cornelius Welles in 1791. In a manuscript list (in the Virginia State Library) of licenses granted in Fairfax County between 1808 and 1822 the following men owned property in Colchester:

<u>Innkeeper</u>	<u>Date of License</u>
Andrew Beddinger	1809 - 1814
Thomas Wheeler	1813 - 1814; 1822 - 1823
Cornelius Welles	1815 - 1818
Robinson Gray	1816 - 1817
Thomas Parsons	1819 - 1820
William Lindsay	1821 - 1822

A final comment on the taverns was given in 1801 by John Davis, an English novelist, who spent three months on the Occoquan and wrote of a tavern at the Colchester bridge in flowery prose:

Every luxury that money can purchase is to be obtained at a first summons; where the richest viands cover the table, and where ice cools the Madeira that has been thrice across the ocean.... My description of the tavern at the mouth of the Occoquan partakes of no hyperbolical amplification: the apartments are numerous and at the same time spacious; carpets of delicate texture cover the floor; and glasses are suspended from the walls in which a Golia might survey himself....

No man can be more complaisant than the landlord. Enter but his house with money in your pocket, and his features will soften into the blandishments of delight; call and your mandate is obeyed; extend your leg and the bootjack is brought you.¹⁰⁶

Colchester During the Revolution

Because this was not a county seat the citizens did not follow the lead of other Potomac river towns in producing a set of resolves against taxation without their consent in the summer of 1774. Dumfries led off with a meeting on June 6th, Port Tobacco across the river in Maryland followed eight days later, and the residents of Fairfax County met at Alexandria on July 18th to propose an embargo on British goods until such taxes were repealed.¹⁰⁷

As tension increased the position of the Scottish merchants along the river became more difficult. With their commercial life oriented toward Great Britain they had not employed native Virginians, whose background "created a resistance to confinement and drudgery."¹⁰⁸ Many of these merchants by now owned extensive property in Maryland and Virginia. Some, like Alexander Henderson, had at first viewed their stay in the colonies as a temporary one, then married local girls. Their loyalties were divided.

After the Boston Tea Party Henderson's feeling was ambivalent. "The Bostonians ought to have destroyed the Tea, but should have sent home the payment for it immediately," was his reported comment. Bryan Fairfax, writing to Washington that some were not completely satisfied with the Fairfax Resolves, said that Henderson "...joined with me in Opinion that the People at Boston were blameable in their Behaviour in other respects; and when I expressed my concern at the Bill then talked of for altering their Charter, he observed that the Measure might be necessary, considering the factious conduct of the People."¹⁰⁹

Well before hostilities began Colchester shared in what must have been a traumatic day. Nicholas Cresswell was in Alexandria on February 28, 1775, and wrote in his journal that this was "The last day tea is to be drunk on the Continent, by act of Congress. The ladies seem very sad about it." There is a tradition in the Mason Neck area concerning a flat rock known as "the tea table." This version of the origin of the name appeared a century later in the Alexandria Gazette:

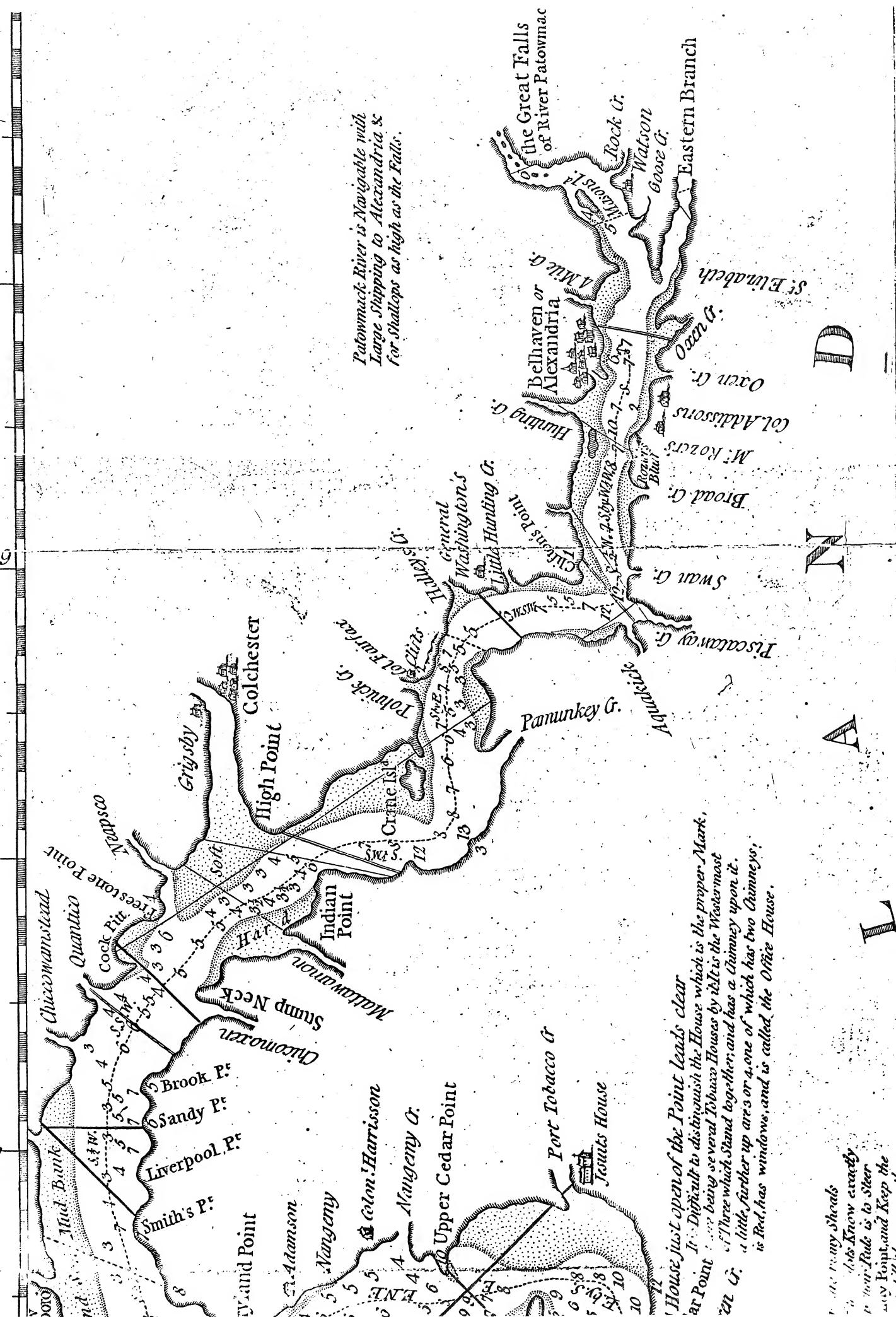


Figure 13. Sayer and Bennet, A New and Accurate Map of the Bay of Chesapeake. London, 1776. Library of Congress.

As there are few men now living who know anything about the Tea Table, I will give its history as I received it from men who lived in those days and were familiar with those times: When the tea was thrown overboard in Boston harbor, Massachusetts, our people got news of it very soon and held a meeting. (I will here remark that Truro Parish was then inhabited by leading men and as true patriots as ever drew the breath of life; therefore the news from Boston necessarily came to them.) The meeting was held and they resolved that they would buy no more tea from the mother country until the unpleasantness was settled, nor would they even use tea in their houses. Having some tea, which was then considered a great luxury, on hand, and not wishing to lose it, but to enjoy it, and at the same time conform to the resolution passed, they built a table at the celebrated spot, and there repaired in fine weather with their tea kettles, tea pots, &c; made the tea and drank it, and thus it was called the Tea Table...¹¹⁰

More serious matters claimed attention that autumn. In October rumors spread that Lord Dunmore was sailing up the Potomac with a raiding force of 4,000 men. Some inhabitants began moving belongings out of town. Dunmore's target provided to be other tidewater rivers rather than the Potomac, but the following summer British ships were operating in the neighborhood. Between July 27 and August 14, 1776, the Fairfax Militia were on duty in Alexandria "to prevent the depredations of Lord Dunmore" and the Prince William Militia guarded the mouth of Quantico Creek. The Alexandrians petitioned the Governor to provide them with cannon so that they might defend themselves from the British, a plea which Peter Wagener was still repeating in 1781.¹¹¹

On July 23rd there was a skirmish on the river above Aquia Creek. Two tenders, a gondola and ten rowboats from the British fleet brought a shore party to Richland and burned William Brent's plantation house. One source states that the enemy went up the Occoquan to the flour mills two miles upstream from Colchester, setting them afire and burning a number of dwellings and parts of the landings.¹¹² They were driven off by the Prince William Militia. The blast furnace where John Ballendine was manufacturing shot¹¹³ was located in the same area.

Hospitals had been established in Dumfries, Colchester and Alexandria by this time. In April 1777 the Continental Congress resolved that "Dr. James Tilton be authorized to repair to Dumfries in Virginia, there to take charge of all Continental soldiers that are or shall be inoculated, and that he be furnished with the necessary beds." Medicinal supplies for each hundred troops undergoing preventive treatment against smallpox included one pound of Peruvian bark, one of Virginian Snakeroot, two pounds of jallap, three pounds of nitre elixir vitriol and six ounces of calomel.

Congress also directed

...that Maj. Gen. Schuyler be directed to send a proper officer to hasten much of the Carolina continental troops, supposed to be now on their way to headquarters; that they halt at Dumfries, Colchester, and Alexandria in Virginia, there to pass through inoculation ...¹¹⁴

Before the process of vaccination was developed, epidemics of smallpox were combated by injection of virus taken from convalescing cases. If this procedure was done under controlled conditions before troops joined the main body of the army, the mortality rate was substantially less than if they had contracted the infectious disease naturally.

The proximity of such hospitals was not well received by the communities concerned. Residents of Fredericksburg complained in December that "from the resort of Parties of Soldiers to the town ... and from the establishment of a hospital at that place in which numbers of infected persons are commonly kept, disorders fatal to the lives of many of the inhabitants are propagated...."¹¹⁵ In Alexandria the conditions in the hospital were so bad that the director was officially investigated. One soldier testified that a patient "had no clothing but an old shirt and half of an old blanket."¹¹⁶ It is likely that the townspeople in Colchester saw a similar situation.

They also observed, in May, a wagonload of Tories passing through town under guard on their way from Alexandria to the prison in Williamsburg.¹¹⁷ Another visitor was traveler Ebenezer Hazard, whose only mention of Colchester was that it was "a paltry village in Fairfax County."¹¹⁸

On the 15th of August, when another British fleet was reported off the coast of Virginia, the Journal of the Council of the State of Virginia noted that "the Regiment lately ordered to join General Washington is still at Alexandria and Colchester under inoculation, it is thought advisable to stop them from proceeding on their march until further orders." During this alarm all private boats and canoes on the Occoquan and their other navigable rivers had been requisitioned. By September 1777 they were returned to their owners. Should an enemy fleet actually come into the Potomac, Peter Wagener and other county lieutenants were empowered to collect the boats again.

In such an atmosphere, with the British fleet blockading the Potomac and what little intracoastal trade there was being diverted to Baltimore, the merchants along the river could no longer function. Alexander Hamilton, a Scottish factor in Piscataway, Maryland, offered his dwelling and storehouse for sale; Glassford & Henderson had liquidated their Alexandria store, on Queen and Fairfax Street, the previous autumn.¹¹⁹ Virginia had ordered "all natives of Great Britain who were partners, agents, factors, storekeepers ... for merchants of Great Britain ... to leave within forty days." The ruling made provision for selling off their effects and added that agents who were friends of the United States or who had wives and children here could remain.¹²⁰

Agents like Alexander Henderson and John Gibson, who succeeded Hector Ross as Colchester representative of Oswald & Denniston, chose to stay in Virginia. They seem to have taken an active part in public affairs during the Revolution. As the war progressed and alien property became forfeit to the state, much of it was acquired by men like these. Lot #5 and 38 owned by Glassford, became escheated property and were regained by Henderson in 1781. Glassford's houses and lots at Port Tobacco and Benedict, Maryland, were offered for sale by the Office of Preservation and Sale of Forfeited Estates.¹²¹ Much of the American business transacted by British firms was taken over by the men who had acted as their agents before the war. Henderson, Ferguson & Gibson gained control of these stores along the Potomac after the close of the Revolution, and Robert Ferguson of Charles County became the firm's Maryland partner.

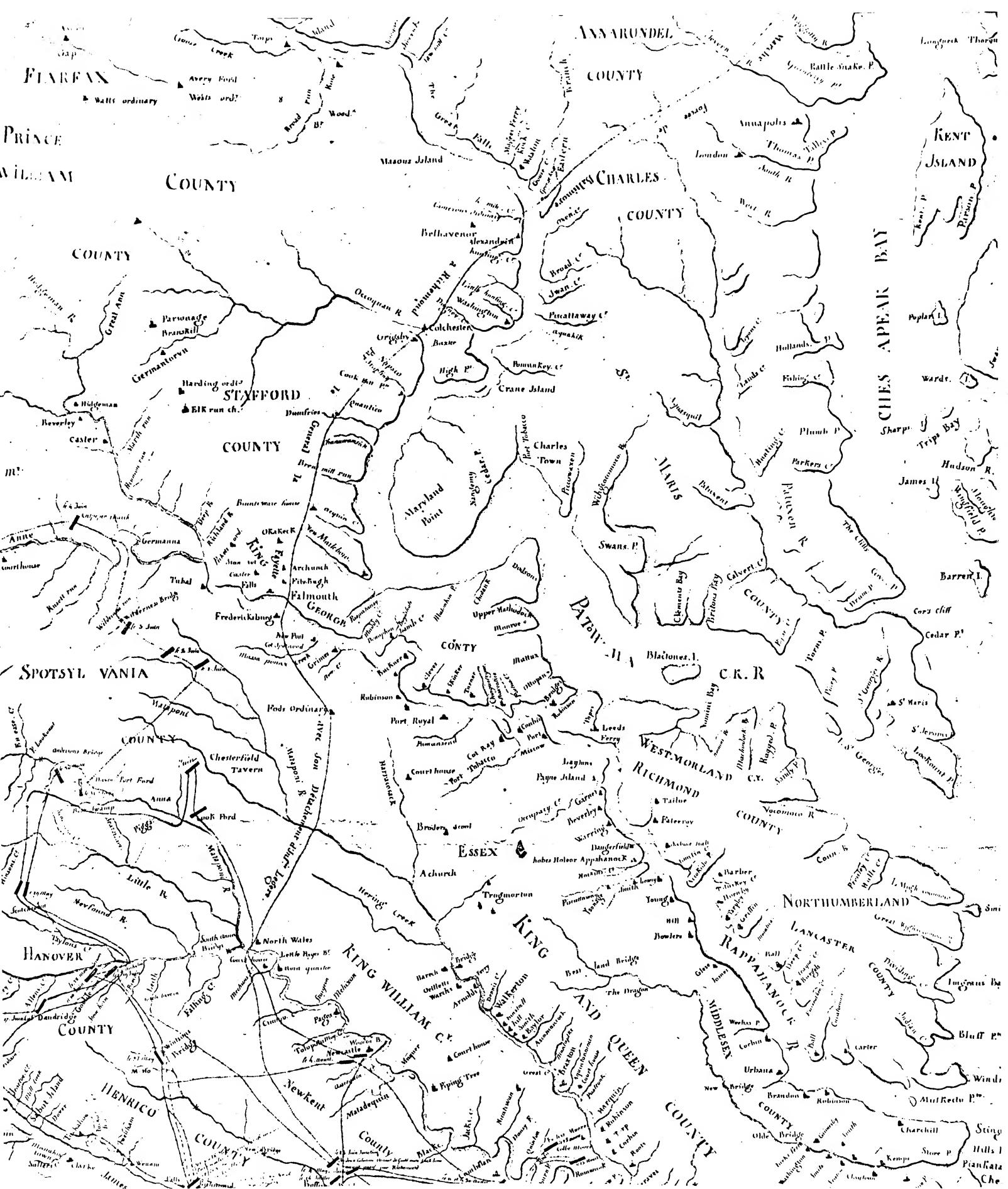


Figure 14. Route of the French Army to Yorktown. Chantavoine, 1781. Library of Congress.

By October 1779, British vessels patrolling the mouth of the river had made it dangerous for incoming ships to check in at the Naval Office at that vicinity. Merchants and "adventurers to Sea" in Alexandria petitioned for a separate Naval Office in that town, declaring that "Alexandria, Dumfries and Colchester, own almost all the Vessells on this River, and there is scarcely a foreign Vessell but what comes addressed to some Merchant in one part of these towns." If such a change could be made "those whom it may suit, can clear out at the present Office, and the Merchants and trading people at Potomac River and Foreigners bound to the Towns aforesaid, can with safety and convenience enter and clear." This request was subsequently granted.¹²²

According to Bishop William Meade, the tireless nineteenth century chronicler of colonial Virginia, Alexander Henderson is said to have retired to his farm in the interior of Fairfax County to avoid capture by British raiders. The sale of three of his lots in 1779 might provide a clue as to his residence at that time, but the record book containing the deed is missing. Henderson owned Moore Hill, on the waters of Bull Run, and referred to himself as a "farmer" in a 1781 deed which designated his residence as Fairfax County rather than in Colchester.¹²³

Little evidence of town life during the middle period of the war has been discovered, with the exception of an occasional notice in the Virginia Gazette that the old tobacco warehouse lots were for sale or that tickets for the third class of the United States Lottery could be obtained from Captain William Thompson.¹²⁴ General Washington mentioned in a letter that the route of the North Carolina Regulars passing from West Point, New York, toward the south led through Colchester.¹²⁵ When Maryland troops marched into town in November 1780 they were forced to wait two days for a favorable wind before being ferried across the Occoquan.¹²⁶

In the spring of 1781, however, George Mason wrote of the British once again coming up the river. On one occasion, he said, ships came within two or three miles of Alexandria, burning and plundering houses and carrying off slaves. Supplies were commandeered from Mount Vernon; Washington subsequently sent a tart letter to his manager stating that he would have rather seen the house burned than aid the enemy. Even as the British harassed those living on the Potomac, the French force under Lafayette was moving south through Virginia.

In September General Washington also passed through Colchester on his way to Yorktown. Some baggage trains of the army crossed the Occoquan upstream at the ford at Wolf Run Shoals in order to avoid delay at the ferry. After the battle of Yorktown the French army went into winter quarters. Baron von Closen, a French officer traveling south, breakfasted in Colchester on May 1, 1782. When the French army marched north in June von Closen wrote:

On the 17th we arrived very early in Colchester ... the artillery, two miles before entering the town, took the left road to the ford ... the troops, as well as wagons, took the right road, in order to cross the Occoquan by the ferry. Fortunately this river is so narrow there that all the wagons were over after dinner. Colchester is a small place containing nothing, the few houses are built half way up the hill ...¹²⁷

14^e Camp 'a Colchester Le 16 Juillet 1782. Miles de Dumayenne



Figure 15. Camp 'a Colchester. Plans des différents camps occupés par l' Armée aux Ordres de Mr le Comte de Rochambeau. Amerique Campagne, 1782. Map Division, Library of Congress.

With that comment, the Baron went on to Mount Vernon. He noted in his journal on June 19th that "Mme. Washington begged me to write to M. le Comte de Custine, whose regiment was at Colchester that day, to invite him and all his officers to ... dine." The language barrier between the French and the Americans was sometimes bridged by conversing in Latin.¹²⁸

On the 16th of July General Rochambeau's forces camped just north of the town along Giles Run. Three days later another Frenchman, Claud Blanchard, arrived at the encampment. "This town," he commented, "is small and miserable as well as the country." Blanchard marched with the 4th Division, which included Saintogne's regiment and a detachment of artillery. They were under the command of Count Custine.¹²⁹

Another meeting took place that day. The Marquis de Chastellux wrote in his journal about encountering the American General Daniel Morgan (who in his youth had driven wagons loaded with wheat to the mills at Occoquan):

I was then at Colchester, where the first division of the troops had just arrived, after having crossed in boats a small river that flows near this town. The baggage train and the artillery had taken another route to reach a rather difficult ford. General Morgan met the baggage train when it was engaged in a narrow gorge, and finding that the wagoners were not managing very well, he stopped and showed them how they should drive their wagons. After having put everything in order, he called at my quarters and had dinner with me...

The Marquis was then commanding the French troops, General Rochambeau having traveled on to Philadelphia.

Rochambeau's cartographers sketched each camp site along the march north from Williamsburg, leaving a unique record of the Virginia villages through which the army passed. "On their arrival at their quarters on the march," commented an observer, "the whole country came to see them and it was a general scene of gaiety and good humor." Perhaps festivities as these in the camp at Alexandria occurred at Colchester:

....the most elegant and handsome young ladies of the neighborhood danced with the officers on the turf, in the middle of the camp, to the sound of military music and (a circumstance which will appear singular to European ideas) the circle was in great measure composed of soldiers who from the heat of the weather, had disengaged themselves from their clothes, retaining not an article of dress except their shirts, which in general were neither extremely long nor in the best condition; nor did this occasion the least embarrassment to the ladies, many of whom were of highly polished manners, and the most exquisite delicacy; or to their friends or parents; so whimsical and arbitrary are manners.¹³¹

That life was indeed returning to normal in this month of July was confirmed by a letter from Dr. James Craik, Jr., who wrote "I spent the last week very agreeably as we had a great race at Coalchester on Thursday and an elegant ball in the evening"¹³²

Chapter III Notes

1

Fourteen ledgers are from the Colchester store 1758-1769 (#184-196 and 216); #225 covers 1795-1800. References in this section to the Glassford records will be cited by ledger and page numbers. Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

2

Harrison, Landmarks, p. 378. Ian Charles C. Graham, Colonists from Scotland: Emigrants to North America 1707-1783 (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press for the American Historical Association, 1956), p. 163.

3

#216:2.

4

Marcus Whiffen, The Eighteenth Century Houses of Williamsburg, Williamsburg Architectural Studies Series, (New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, Inc., for Colonial Williamsburg, 1960), p. 119.

5

Henderson, Letterbook, December 29, 1759.

6

#184:63.

7

Maryland Gazette, July 9, 1767. Lot #3 was advertised as being "where Alexander Henderson formerly lived."

8

#184:74. The Metzger house is 18 feet by 30 feet. The 1759 building may be one of the buried foundations in front of this house.

9

#184:93.

10

Fairfax County Deed Book D-1, p. 869.

11 #184:88.

12 Henderson, Letterbook, June 1760.

13 #184:179.

14 Henderson, Letterbook, September 25, 1761.

15 His assistant, John Campbell, went to the Nottingham, Maryland, store. Brice stayed in Colchester until July 1762.

16 #185:1.

17 #185:7.

18 Henderson, Letterbook, June 21, 1763. In April 1769, Archibald Henderson served as justice of the Prince William County Court; by August 1770 he was living in Great Britain (Calendar of State Papers, I, 261, 263).

19 Henderson, Letterbook, September 17, 1763.

20 #186:197.

21 #186:236.

22 #187:34.

23 #187:185.

24 #188:1.

25

Maryland Gazette, September 12, 1765. On October 10th the paper announced that because of the Stamp Act it was "Expiring, in Hopes of Resurrection to life again." Regular publication did not resume until March 1766.

26

"Brief Extract from the Journals of J. Brown," February 1766, #91 in the MSS Bogle Papers on "Extracts Relating to Virginia and the Tobacco Trade 1729-1787," Mitchell Library, Glasgow. Microfilm #5803, Alderman Library, University of Virginia. These papers chiefly are concerned with their store in Falmouth, Virginia. Bogle was in partnership with Hugh Blackburn in Glasgow as Hugh Blackburn & Company in 1765. The firm name changed to Blackburn & Bogle. Their factor in Colchester was Benjamin Grayson. After 1773 (Deed Book K-1) no further transactions are indexed for the firm. Fairfax County Deed Book G-1, p. 260 lists the names of the partners.

27

Fairfax County Court Order Book, August 15, 1768.

28

#188:154.

29

#188:173.

30

#188:190. The assets in 1766 were £1698.3.6.

31

#193:210.

32

Fairfax County Deed Book G-1, p. 287.

33

#192:12. No clue as to which lot was built upon appears in the ledger.

34

#193:7. Johnston's 1758 purchase is mentioned in Chapter III of this study.

35

#192:12.

36

#190:205, 233.

37

#194:3, 6, 7, 8.

38

The Diaries of George Washington 1748-1799, ed. by John C. Fitzpatrick,
(4 vols.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin for the Mount Vernon Ladies Association, 1925), I,
301.

39

#194:11.

40

#196:290.

41

The deeds involving #5 and 38 are in Fairfax County Deed Book K-1, p. 209, 211 and the sale is referred to in Q-1, p. 452; to #25 and 39 in K-1, p. 187; to #19, 21, 23 in L-1, p. 41. This last purchase also included lot #3. The reference to the wagon road is in Hening, Statutes, VIII, 549.

42

Charles Lee Lewis, Famous American Marines (Boston: L. C. Page & Company, 1950), p. 75. Washington, Writings, III, 115.

43

Fairfax County Deed Book K-1, p. 296. This was written in January. When the marriage contract was recorded in April, Henry Moore was already dead.

44

Hening, Statutes, VIII, 508.

45

Hening, Statutes, VIII, p. 549.

46

The deed for #22 is in Fairfax County Deed Book K-1, p. 288; #24 referred to in K-1, p. 219 and #40 in K-1, p. 217; #37 in M-1, p. 74; #30 and 32 in M-1, p. 173. This last deed included #10 as well. Wagener's five lots were #1, 2, 9, 17, 36.

47

Snowden, Some Landmarks, p. 73.

48

Maryland Gazette, November 22, 1771, June 28, 1770, and September 26, 1771.

49

Hening, Statutes, VII, 530, 582.

50

Arthur Pierce Middleton, Tobacco Coast: a Maritime History of the Chesapeake Bay in the Colonial Era, ed. by George Carrington Mason, (Newport News, Virginia: The Mariners Museum, 1953), pp. 100, 282.

51

Middleton, Tobacco Coast, p. 95. The 1775 crop was worth four million dollars. Page 121.

52

Ibid., p. 105.

53

Hening, Statutes, VIII, 508.

54

Glassford, Records, #186:236. There are no entries in the ledgers for 1762 or 1763. Other materials may have been furnished at a previous time or purchased from Grayson.

55

Fairfax County Court Order Book, August 1768.

56

Hening, Statutes, VIII, 508.

57

Fairfax County Will Book C-1, p. 19. Estate account of Christopher Neale.

58

Executive Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia, ed. by Benjamin J. Hillman, (6 vols.; Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1966) VI, 330. October 27, 1769, court.

59

Mason, Papers, I, 234, 339.

60

Council Journals, I, 448. July 4, 1777. Francis Cofer was appointed assistant inspector.

61

Fairfax County Court Order Book, August 23, 1783. Bayly had acquired the warehouses from Blackburn & Bogle between 1767 and 1770; the deed is probably that indexed in missing Deed Book H-1, p. 321. His will may be found in Proceedings in Land Causes, I, 6.

62

Council Journals, III. May 13, 1782. A list of the inspectors may be found in the appendix of the present research report.

63

Virginia State Auditor's Ledger #179. Account of Duty on Tobacco, Colchester Warehouse 1781-1789. Accession #28. Virginia State Library.

64

Hening, Statutes, X, 481.

65

Council Journals, III, September 25, November 7, 13, December 24, 1782.

66

List of Tobacco Warehouses on Virginia Rivers, September 1780. Great Britain, Public Record Office MSS 30/11/3-4. Microfilm reel #510, p. 24, 25. The compiler of the list considered the total "rather a short than middling yearly crop."

67

Memoire Sur Le Commerce du Tabac de la Virginie et Maryland (Londres: 30 Mai, 1766). #846 in the George Arents Collection on the History of Tobacco, New York Public Library.

68

Samuel Shepherd, The Statutes at Large of Virginia ... 1792-1806, a continuation of Hening, (3 vols., New Series; reprint; New York: AMS Press, 1970), I, 263, 264, 404; II, 156.

69

Auditor's Ledger #195/30.

70

Mason, Papers, III, 1139.

71

Fairfax County Deed Book W-1, p. 316. Report of inspector John J. Stone, September 16, 1795.

72

Code of Virginia, 1819, pt. 2, p. 135. An Act to reduce into one law all previous regulations on tobacco established warehouses at Aquia and Colchester, and set the salaries of inspectors at \$208.33. It is doubtful whether this legislation was acted upon.

73

Hening, Statutes, X. 481, 497.

74

Ibid., VII, 571.

75

Harrison, Landmarks, p. 402.

76

Fairfax County Deed Book E-1, p. 43.

77

Glassford, Records, #186. August 28, 1764.

78

Ibid., #187:98. The ledger does not mention whether these were loaves or pounds of ship's bread.

79

Ibid., #190:202.

80

Mason, Papers, I, 45. A Loan Agreement for Maurice Pound, October 1759. A note by the editor mentions the other signers.

81

Fairfax County Deed Book D-1, p. 708. The page, unfortunately, has been torn out.

82

Referred to in Deed Book E-1, p. 156.

83

Maryland Gazette, August 1, 1765.

84

Hening, Statutes, VII, 569. The Act also offers a prize for silk grown in the colony.

85

Fairfax County Court Order Book, March 15, 1763.

86

Shepherd, Statutes, I, 142.

87

Fairfax County Court Order Book, February 19, 1760.

88

Hening, Statutes, X, 207.

89

Fairfax County Court Order Book, April 19, 1790, February 21, 1791.

90

The Journal of Nicholas Cresswell 1774-1777 (New York: The Dial Press, 1924), p. 20.

91

The Colchester Tavern accounts in Henderson's ledger were placed under Wagener's entry. Wagener's other waterfront lot, #2, was on the south side of Essex Street. It was mentioned frequently in the 1789 Mason v. Wagener suit but there was no reference to a tavern on the lot. Fairfax County Deed Book R-1, p. 124 states that Mason could build a house for his ferryman to live in. See also p. 417, 421.

92

Glassford, Records, #216:10.

93

Ibid., #184:132 for tavern items; #185:38 for corks; #186:234 for rum.

94

Maryland Gazette, June 3, 1762.

95

Glassford, Records, #189:102. Tyler's account has a notation that he had died. William Courts' background is mentioned in Fairfax County Deed Book G-1, p. 144. Washington, Diaries, January 23, 1771.

96

Virginia Gazette (Purdie), August 31, 1775.

97

John Ferdinand Dalziel Smyth, A Tour in the United States of America, (2 vols.; London: G. Robinson, 1784), I, 176.

98

Virginia Journal & Alexandria Advertiser, February 1, 1787; Dumfries, Virginia Gazette & Agricultural Repository, June 14, 1792. The few surviving issues of this paper are in the library of Harvard University, with photostats in the Rare Book Room, Library of Congress.

99

Columbian Mirror & Alexandria Gazette, October 27, 1798.

100

Fairfax County Deed Book K-1, p. 187 refers to "Linton's inclosure." The deed from Waugh is in Deed Book F-1, p. 73 (missing book). There is no deed indexed from Grayson. (Maryland Gazette, July 9, 1767).

101

Glassford, Records, #185:141; #187:10. Snowden, Some Landmarks, p. 73.

102

Fairfax County Deed Book K-1, p. 197, L-1, p. 41. Grayson's mortgages are mentioned in the Virginia Gazette (Purdie & Dixon), December 9, 1773.

103

Fairfax County Deed Book B-2, p. 192. The list has been rearranged into categories.

104

Columbian Mirror & Alexandria Gazette, October 9, 1800.

105

Alexandria Advertiser & Commercial Intelligencer, October 21, 1802.

106

John Davis, Travels of Four Years and a Half in the United States of America during 1798, 1799, 1800, 1801 and 1802, intro. and notes by A. J. Morrison, (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1909), p. 267.

107

Maryland Gazette, June 16, 1774.

108

Clifford Dowdey, The Golden Age: A Climate for Greatness in Virginia 1732-1775 (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1970), p. 177.

109

Washington, Writings, III, 237n. Bryan Fairfax to Washington, August 5, 1774.

110

Alexandria Gazette, July 19, 1876.

111

Council Journals, October 15, 1776, for the Fairfax Militia, September 17th for Prince William; also September 7th; April 3, 1781.

112

Snowden, Some Landmarks, p. 83. Maryland Gazette, November 7, 1776, gives a deposition of Capt. Robert Conway on the skirmish. The rebuilt Richland house is still standing at Widewater, Virginia, next to the railroad. It is owned by the Kendall family.

113

Council Journals, June 11, 1776.

114

Ibid., July 22, 1776, mentioning the Dumfries hospital. Lewis C. Duncan, Medical Men in the American Revolution 1775-1783, The American Medical Bulletin, Number 25, (Carlisle Barracks, Penna.: Medical Field Service School, by direction of the Secretary of War, 1931), pp. 14-17.

115

Council Journals, December 4, 1777.

116

Duncan, Medical Men, p. 204.

117

Maryland Gazette, June 12, 1777.

118

"The Journal of Ebenezer Hazard in Virginia, 1777," ed. by Fred Shelley, Virginia Magazine, LXII (October 1954), 402.

119

Maryland Gazette, July 10, 1777; Virginia Gazette (D. & A.), September 14, 1776. Edwin W. Beitzell, Life on the Potomac River (Abell, Md.: for the author, 1968), p. 24, discusses the economic effect of the war upon the Potomac region.

120

Council Journals, January 1, 1777.

121

Maryland Gazette, July 12, 1781.

122 "Naval Office on the Potomac," William & Mary Quarterly, 2nd series, II, (October 1922) 292.

123 Fairfax County Deed Book D-4, p. 388.

124 Virginia Gazette, November 27, 1779.

125 Washington, Writings, XVII, 155. November 19, 1779.

126 Calendar of Maryland State Papers, No. 3, The Brown Books, ed. by Roger Thomas, (Annapolis: Hall of Records Commission, 1948), p. 78.

127 Baron von Closen, Revolutionary Journal, 1780-1783, trans. and ed. by Evelyn M. Acomb (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1958), pp. 211, 214.

128 J. J. Jusserand, With Americans of Past and Present Days (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916), p. 53, quoting letters of French officers.

129 "Journal of Claud Blanchard 1780-1783," trans. by William Duane, ed. by Thomas Balch (1876), in Eyewitness Accounts of the American Revolution (New York: New York Times and Arno Press, 1969), p. 165.

130 Marquis de Chastellux, Travels in North America in the Years 1780, 1781 and 1782, 2 vols., rev. trans., ed. by Howard C. Rice, Jr., (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963), II, 580n.

131 Ibid., p. 615; Alexandria Gazette, September 5, 1857.

132 Ethel Roby Hayden, "Port Tobacco, Lost Town of Maryland," Maryland Historical Magazine, XL (December 1945), 261.

Chapter IV

THE POST REVOLUTIONARY PERIOD

Town Life Returns to Normal

A traveler passing through Colchester in August 1787, described the town as "pleasantly situated on rising ground, has but 20 houses but likely to increase. It has much country trade - a little below the ferry is a large Bay from one to seven miles over. The town is airy and healthy."¹ Count Luigi Castiglioni, who was there a year earlier, could find nothing more to say than calling it "a little place on the Occoquan."²

The first observer, Samuel Vaughan, commented also that there were two hundred houses in Dumfries. This estimate seems exaggerated, although the population of Alexandria in 1785 was estimated at 2,000. Alexandria loaded 20 to 30 vessels annually with tobacco, wheat and flour, exporting about 10,000 hogsheads yearly at a guinea per hogshead, according to another visitor, Robert Hunter.³ Even before the Revolution the towns of Alexandria and Dumfries, with their headstart of four years over Colchester, had more mercantile establishments. In 1775, there were 11 merchants in Dumfries, 20 in Alexandria and four in Colchester listed in Robert Carter's papers.⁴

Commercial activity, however, was not at a standstill. Nicholas and Valentine Peers, Alexandria merchants, opened a Colchester store in June 1784. John Gibson had a storehouse on the main street, and John Brown opened the Castle Inn in 1786. Alexander Henderson retained his store and Huie & Reed of Alexandria were renting the building formerly owned by John Mills, on half an acre adjacent to the town.⁵

Henderson had just been reelected to the Virginia Assembly and he was spending more of his time at his farm, Moore Hill. Robert Fergusson, his Maryland partner, called this his "country paradise," adding that "during the sultry season I would rather be excused from traversing unpleasant paths which lead to it."⁶ Henderson's son Archibald, who was to serve more than 50 years in the United States Marine Corps and become its youngest Commandant, was born in Colchester on January 21, 1783.⁷

Writing on August 29, 1784, to Fergusson in Port Tobacco, Henderson said that the ship Ann was expected soon in Alexandria with a cargo of dry goods and salt from Liverpool or Whitehaven. "The balance of trade between Virginia and Europe I estimate at half a million against Virginia for the year 1784 - I hope you have recovered your health and sold our tobacco." The firm of Henderson, Fergusson & Gibson in 1785 purchased lots #47 and 48 in Port Tobacco, formerly the property of John Glassford & Co.

Another son was born, at Moore Hill, in December 1784. "On Wednesday," Henderson told Fergusson, "my wife brought the world a son, a hearty stout child - she has been ill but rested tolerably last night." That autumn had been a sickly one.

On the Treasury of Virginia in ac with Boyd Stone Inspectors at the State Warehouse by
To 2 Salaries at \$50 each is \$100.00
To Ware house Rent on 845 bushels 1
Ship from 1st Oct 1790 to 1st Oct 1791 at \$6 61. 7. 6
To Cash sent to Baltimore to purchase
Scale, Beam and New weight \$ 28. 0. 0.
To disbursements as per accts 9. 3. 11.
To 2 pds. on 54. 10. 7. 1. 7. 7.
To Balance due Mr. Green over \$ 53. 11. 0
253.10

By Tax on 845 bushels shipped from
1st of Oct 1790 to 1st Oct 1791 at \$ 253. 10. 0

6. Captain & Boyd Stone

* John Stone made oath to the above account
John Stone made Oath to the above account
1st Nov 1792 before H. H. J.

53. 11. 0
28. 0. 0
81. 11. 0

Figure 16. Accounts of the inspectors of Colchester warehouse with the Treasurer of Virginia, 1792. Virginia State Library.

1790	The Treasurer of Virginia	18
November	To Blacksmith for adjusting weights & for Iron &c	3.17.9
	To Carpenters for Steining Scales	0.6.0
	To 4 lbs Marking Irons	0 5.4
	To Books & paper	2.8.6
1791	To 2 Pounds Gun powder	3.6.
July	To 10 lbs Chalk	3.4
	To bringing & returning Standards Adjust the weights	2.0.0
		19.3.11
	E 8 <u>Albany</u> 8/1800	

Figure 17. Detail of disbursements of account referred to in Figure 16. Virginia State Library.

"Wherever I go I am surrounded with complaints, and have really been detained at ministering to the distressed."⁸

He was still serving as a vestryman of Truro Parish. When that body met at Colchester in February 1784 it received notice of the resignation of a fellow member, General Washington.⁹ Stripped of its official standing when the Episcopal Church ceased to be the established religious body in Virginia, the vestry was dissolved the following year.¹⁰

In March 1785, Henderson was appointed as one of four commissioners from Virginia who met with their Maryland counterparts at Mount Vernon to sign the first Potomac River Compact. This agreement between the two states concerned matters of trade, water rights, and currency. It was to remain in force through many years of "oyster wars" between fishermen until a new compact was signed in 1962.¹¹

The Hendersons moved to Dumfries¹² about 1787. The once-handsome brick house in that town in which they resided is still standing. Henderson died in 1815 and is buried near Dumfries in the present subdivision of Country Club Lake off Route 234. His obituary said that he had resided in Virginia nearly 60 years, and was "a merchant of the first class" and "always a man of the first respectability." He was "a particular and intimate friend of George Washington" and "a magistrate, repeatedly a member of the Virginia legislature," and always "a real and firm friend to the rights and liberties of his adopted country." Henderson was called the father of the equalization law. "Few men," concluded the writer, "have rendered more essential services to the state in the capacity of legislator."¹³

Some Problems with the Stagecoach

Many years ago an anonymous poet, then staying at Belmont on Mason Neck, had written of the trials of traveling by stagecoach. The company encountered, he declared, could easily have been depicted in Hogarth's etchings, and

If one was sure in each Stage-Coach to meet
A company so sociable, so sweet,
E'er I would trouble them again with mine.
Instead of riding One Mile, I'd walk Nine.¹⁴

In a letter to a friend in England, George Washington spoke of the conditions of travel by stage in 1785:

From the Southern parts of this State, say from Norfolk, thro' Hampton, Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Alexandria which is within a few miles of this place, there is a regular Stage which passes thrice every week, it is neither the best nor the worst of its kind. From Alexandria thro' the Metropolis of every State There is also a regular stage to Portsmouth in New Hampshire ... they pass as often as those first mentioned; so that not more than three intervening days can happen between one stage day and another. A person may therefore, at any time between the first of April and the first of December, travel from Richmond ... to Boston in

ten or twelve days; and return in the same time. Between this State and Charleston (So. Carolina) no Stages are yet established¹⁵

Winter travel was less dependable. Alexander Henderson complained, "We are now entirely without money ... it is necessary that a supply be got here from Baltimore immediately and the stage runs now very irregularly."¹⁶ He wrote in February, just a few weeks after an unnerving mishap had taken place in the neighborhood. The Alexandria paper gave these details:

Tuesday night the stage from Colchester to Dumfries overset in a gully 15 feet deep, smashed the stage in a thousand pieces, and threw the horses on their backs where they continued until three o'clock yesterday morning; the passengers escaped being hurt, and the baggage was saved.¹⁷

Washington frequently took guests from Mount Vernon to Colchester to catch the stage, as he did when James Madison visited him in March 1788.

The line between Baltimore and Richmond left Baltimore at three in the morning and arrived in Colchester before dark. Leaving Colchester at the same time the next day, the passengers had another overnight stop before arriving in Richmond on the third morning. In 1784, Nathan Twining held this franchise, in 1787 John Hoomes took his place.¹⁸ After the route was diverted to Occoquan Nathaniel Ellicott had the stage and mail contract between Alexandria and Dumfries. In 1809, Ellicott attempted to sell his contract. Three years later his successor put new carriages on the route and changed from alternate days to a daily run. For \$3.00 a traveler could ride in the mail stage, which carried only two passengers. This vehicle left Alexandria at 5:00 a.m. and arrived in Fredericksburg the next morning; its return run left Fredericksburg at 3:00 a.m. and reached Alexandria at 3:30 p.m. A larger coach departed from Triplett's Hotel in Fredericksburg at 4:00 a.m. each morning. Twenty-five pounds of luggage per passenger were carried without extra charge. On one trip Alexander Sevier lost a Marine officer's full dress uniform when his trunk was stolen from the baggage rack behind the stagecoach, "cut off a few minutes before day-light" while the coach was under way.¹⁹

The Post Office

In 1773, an official post route was established in Virginia.²⁰ At a meeting of deputy postmaster-generals held on November 24, 1774, a commission was made out for Alexander Henderson, Esq., to be in charge of the mails at Colchester in Virginia.²¹ In his survey of the post roads at that time, Hugh Finlay did not cover the territory in Virginia north of Williamsburg. It is probable, however, that mail was carried between Alexandria and Fredericksburg on the King's Highway which passed through Colchester.

A century later a comparison of postal revenues in this part of the state was printed in the Alexandria paper:

Alexandria	Feb. 1776-June 1778	L63.165 ¹ ₂
Colchester	Jan. 1776-June 1778	L11.19.9
Dumfries	Nov. 1776-April 1779	L56.14.5 ¹ ₂
Fredericksburg	July, 1777-July, 1778	L62.8.9

Williamsburg produced L329.90¹₂ in revenues over this two year period. The returns were reckoned in Virginia currency at six shillings to the dollar and also in that of Pennsylvania, where the exchange was seven shillings, sixpence to the dollar.²²

The first annual report of the Post Office Department in 1790 displays a similar ratio in the business conducted in towns along the Potomac:²³

October 1789 to January 1790

Town	Total Rec'd.	Postmaster Salary	Net Revenue
Alexandria	\$ 289.90	\$ 57.98	\$ 266.64
Colchester	7.07	1.42	5.65
Dumfries	86.09	17.30	68.79

The figures for 1791 covered a 12 month period:²⁴

Alexandria	\$1,580.00	\$316.00	\$1,234.00
Colchester	45.00	9.00	36.00
Dumfries	380.00	77.00	298.00

In 1793, there were 195 post offices established along the 5,642 miles of post roads in the United States, usually about 15 miles apart. A single-sheet letter cost 8¢ to send 40 miles. Postage rose on a graduated scale according to distance and double rates were charged for a two page letter.²⁵ Postmasters in Colchester were reported to have been William Thompson (1790-1793), Zachariah Ward (1794-1804), and Samuel Bayly (1804-1813). Peter Wagener served in this capacity in 1811, according to an official list,²⁶ and the last postmaster before the post office was closed in October 1815, was Thomas Morgan.²⁷ An office was opened at Pohick three years later.²⁸

A chart of the post routes of the United States, printed in Edinburgh in 1812, was found in the museum at Winterthur, Delaware. It shows three stops on the main post route through Virginia - Alexandria, Colchester, and Williamsburg. Mrs. Robert Duncan, who owns the Fairfax Arms, has a copy of this chart.

The Tannery

The first mention of a tannery came in a letter of George Mason in 1787 giving advice to his son on the use of animal hair in making plaster. "The tanner at Colchester has promised to reserve all he has for you, at the price of one shilling per bushell, contracted for by him last year, which Reintzell has promised he shall do."²⁹

In 1790, Joel Beach of Colchester advertised for a tanner and shoemaker, while ten years later one Samuel Hattersley, who described himself as a "Leather Breeches Maker," begged "leave to acquaint the public, that he has got an assortment of LEATHER BREECHES, and Leather dressed in oil, which he warrants equal to any made in London, priced from five to ten dollars a pair."³⁰

The exact location of the tanyard is not known, but since its operation required the sinking of vats into the ground it is likely that one site would have been used throughout the period that it was active. A deed of 1825 refers to lot #27 as one "commonly called the tanyard lot,"³¹ which had been owned since 1792 by Peter Coulter. Coulter paid taxes on this lot only from 1817 to 1828, and neither Hattersley, Reintzell or Beach seem to have owned any property in the town.³²

William Huskin, another tanner, did pay tax on one lot from 1796 to 1809 but does not appear in the index to Fairfax County deedbooks. This illustrates a typical situation in the land titles of the town; a general nonchalance seems to have existed regarding such formalities as writing or recording deeds. Many transactions may have been oral agreements. Huskins, in his will, directed his wife Mary to sell the house, lot, and tanyard in Colchester if money were needed to pay his debts. The lot was purchased by Richard Simpson, who paid taxes on it from 1811 to 1816. Simpson, however, did not buy any of the tanning equipment at the sale in 1806 after Huskin's death. Most of the scouring ladles, lime hooks and parcels of leather were purchased by other neighbors.³³

Robert Lindsay, identified as a tanner in the account of the sale, bought most of the tools. The list of his purchases reveals some of the equipment needed:

2 oil jugs	1/6
2 oil piggons	/9
1 scumner	3/4
2 fleshing knives, bark knives	4/3
2 slikers, a smoothing stone and	1/6
3 graining cords	
3 shutes	8/5
2 currying boards	1/6
tanbark	9/6
1 cannon stove	22/6
6 oil barrels	3/2

Tanning was a complex operation involving the salting of hides, washing and then soaking them in lime before they were worked and stretched. The hides were next hung in a heated area, dipped again in lime and gone over with a flesher's beam to remove the fat. After being washed and pickled they were then dipped into a tannic acid solution made from oak bark. The final stage was the currying, when the hides were scraped, cleaned, beaten and smoothed. Sometimes the finished leather was colored.³⁴

These processes required crowding many elements into a small space. An agreement made in 1762 by tanner Peter Weir in Alexandria called for his fitting and sinking six tan vats seven feet long, four feet deep and four feet wide, two lime holes, and one

water hole of the same dimensions. He was to provide "four handlers or small tan vats four feet square, a mill house and a stone sufficient to grind the bark, a house over the lime holes and water hole sufficient to work and labor in, and a dwelling house 24 feet by 16 feet with a chimney."³⁵

A nineteenth century tanyard in the town of Occoquan contained a more elaborate complex of a dwelling, a large currying shop, bark house, beam house and several vats, all of which were on one acre:

There is a constant and full supply of bark of all kinds to be bought low, and there can be bought from 560 to 700 hides every year of the finest kind. It possesses a great many natural advantages, there being no tannery for a considerable distance from it.³⁶

From this advertisement in 1934 it is reasonable to assume that the Colchester tanyard was no longer in operation. As early as the 1820 Federal Census of Manufacturers, in fact, the sparse return from Fairfax County included only one tannery. Its owner, George Grimes, sent in no answer to the questionnaire. Joseph Christy of Fredericksburg, however, did reply, and said of his tannery that the demand for his manufactures was limited and the sale dull.³⁷

The End of an Era

In 1784, when J.F.D. Smyth visited Colchester he was unimpressed by its appearance. "Colchester, although it be larger than Dumfries, has not half as much trade, and is an ill-built, nasty little town situated on the north side of the river Occoquan... The trade of Dumfries and Colchester consists chiefly of tobacco and wheat and there is a very fine back country to support it; and a considerable number of ships were located here annually."³⁸

The volume of trade was large enough to induce George Mason to petition the legislature to allow him to erect additional warehouses on his land in Prince William County opposite the town, in 1787. Some shipbuilding was being carried on,³⁹ and the social activities that year included a ball to celebrate George Washington's birthday. Describing one such affair, the Alexandria paper said that "Joy beamed in every countenance. Sparkling eyes, dimpled cheeks dressed in smiles ... contributed to heighten the pleasure of the scene."⁴⁰

Numerous travelers on the King's Highway paused at the taverns while they awaited the ferry which would carry them to the other side of the Occoquan. "A list of the men and women who crossed that ferry," concluded a modern writer "...would read like a directory of Virginia and the colonies to the north and south."⁴¹ The boats used in fairly protected waters were flat-bottomed lighters with sloped ends. Loaded by means of an apron or gangplank, they could be used at causeways or wharves. In size the craft could be as large as 30 feet in length and eight feet wide. In some places ferries were propelled along a fixed rope; in others they were poled or rowed.⁴² Sailing ferries were used where greater stretches of open water were crossed. From a description of one such

vessel, with a green stern and red sails, built like a ship's longboat, these boats must have been colorful indeed.⁴³

From a reference in Henderson's ledger to cutting the ferryway, it would seem that a causeway might have been used in 1765. At that time Joseph Gray was the ferryman.⁴⁴ When George Mason finally settled his dispute with Peter Wagener in 1789 over the ownership of the ferry rights, one concession made was that stone or earth from Wagener's land could be taken to make or repair a wharf. Mason could "land passengers, horses, or wheeled carriages or anything else crossing the ferry ... on any part of the shore... in case of ice, wind or other stress of weather."⁴⁵

A winter crossing was never a comfortable event. Francis Asbury, the Methodist minister, said of his passage over the Potomac to Alexandria in December 1791:

We crossed ... in an open boat on whose icy bottom the horses with difficulty kept their feet; and still worse it would have been, had I not thoughtfully called for some straw to strew beneath them; we had five of them on board and the waves were high ... I was nearly frozen, being hardly able to walk or talk.⁴⁶

If high winds, low tide, or vagaries of weather caused no problems, there was always the human element. When President Washington made his southern tour he had this hazardous experience:

In attempting to cross the ferry at Colchester with the four horses hitched to the Chariot by the neglect of the person who stood before them, one of the leaders got overboard when the boat was in swimming water and 50 yards from shore - with much difficulty he escaped drowning before he could be disengaged. His struggling frightened the others in such a manner that one after another and in quick succession they all got overboard harnessed and fastened as they were and with the utmost difficulty they were saved and the Carriage escaped being dragged after them, as the whole of it happened in swimming water and at a distance from shore. Providentially - indeed miraculously - by the exertions of people who went off in boats and jumped into the River as soon as the Batteau was forced into wading water - no damage was sustained by the horses, Carriage or harness.⁴⁷

But time was running out for this vital, if frequently perilous, crossing at Colchester. In 1791, an attempt was made to establish a rival ferry farther upstream. George Mason naturally considered this unnecessary and was irate when John Hooe of Prince William County sent a petition to that effect to the legislature. Quickly drafting a counterpetition, Mason accused Hooe of obtaining the bulk of his signatures from Maryland boatmen anchored at the mills at Occoquan below the falls. "How easy it is," he wrote, "to persuade Men to sign anything, by which they can't be affected." Coming from the author of the Bill of Rights of individual citizens, this is a provocative comment.⁴⁸

Despite Mason's opposition Hooe's ferry was approved.⁴⁹ George Mason died the following year, stating in his will that the ferry rights had been vested in his family since the Occoquan area was first settled in the mid-seventeenth century and bequeathing the ferry operation to his son Thomas. When his father died in 1792, Thomas Mason

was 22. Because he seemed less inclined than his brothers George and John to become a merchant, he was not given the benefit of their training in France but was educated at an academy in Fredericksburg, Virginia. Thomas resided in Alexandria and in 1793 married Sarah Hooe. In the tangled skein of Virginia relationships, she may well have been a cousin of the entrepreneur who sought to take over the profits of the Occoquan ferry.⁵⁰

There were indications that a rival ferry was not the only disturbing factor which faced the town. Writing in 1791, William Loughton Smith mentioned another ominous sign:

On Tuesday I got to Colchester to breakfast. This little place is seated on a river and seems to be in a declining condition ... passed through Dumfries, which has some trade, tho said to be on the decline, owing to a want of navigation, as the little river on which it is placed is filling up.⁵¹

The merchants in Dumfries attempted to correct this condition by building a canal, but the towns on tributaries of the Potomac could not overcome the effects of siltation in addition to the competition from the deep-water port of Alexandria.

Although no separate figures have been found showing exports from Colchester during the 1790's, it is evident that the Alexandria District far surpassed that of Dumfries. In 1794, the registered tonnage of Alexandria was 9083 compared to Dumfries' 992. Alexandria exports in 1791 were \$381,000; those from Dumfries \$79,000. Four years later the difference was even greater, with Alexandria shipping \$948,000 worth of goods and Dumfries only \$62,000.⁵²

In 1796, Charles Smith's Gentlemen's Political Pocket Almanac and American Gazetteer lists Dumfries as a port of entry and post town 276 miles from New York but does not mention Colchester. Matthew Carey's American Atlas (1796) shows Colchester, but a lengthier description may be found in Jedidiah Morse's American Gazetteer in 1797.

Colchester, Port town in Fairfax County on the northeast bank of Occoquan creek, three or four miles from its confluence with the Potowmack; it is here about 100 yards wide, and navigable for boats. It contains about 40 houses and lies 16 miles southwest of Alexandria, 106 miles north by east of Richmond and 172 miles from Philadelphia.⁵³

Morse mentioned that Dumfries was a port of entry and post town, with an Episcopal church, court house and jail. He said of Alexandria that it had about 400 houses, 2,748 inhabitants, and that the street plan was similar to that used in Philadelphia.

The ascendancy of Alexandria as a center of trade was recognized when an attempt was made in 1797 to move the seat of the District Court serving Prince William, Fairfax, Loudoun and Fauquier Counties. Urging its removal from Dumfries to Centreville, in Fairfax County, the petition stated that roads from all parts of the District passed through their community on the way to "the most important market on the Potomac, the town of Alexandria."⁵⁴

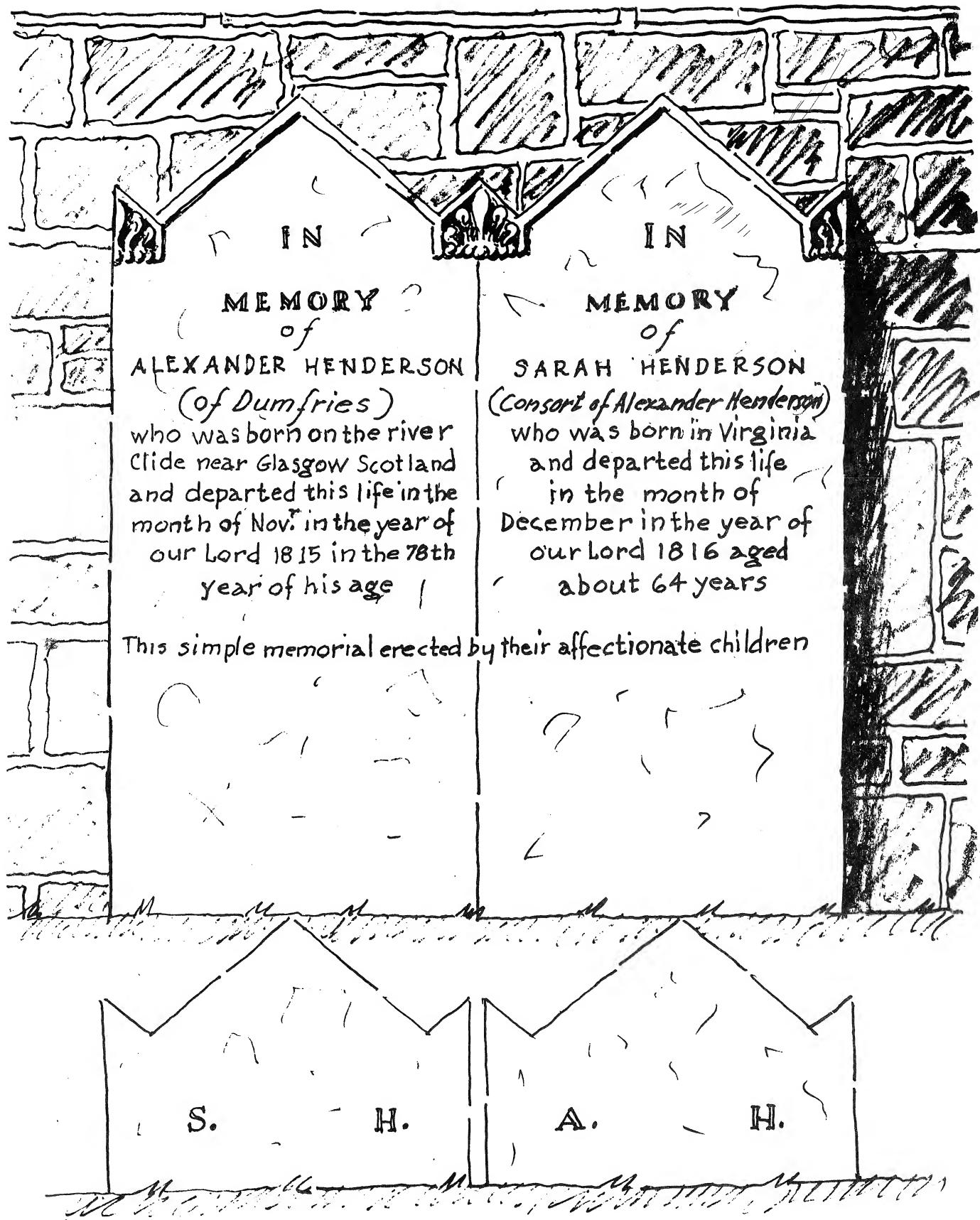


Figure 18. Tombstone of Alexander and Sarah Henderson in Country Club Lake subdivision, near Dumfries, Virginia. Sketch by James P. Haynes.

Chapter IV Notes

1

Samuel Vaughan, Diary, August 10, 1787. Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

2

Travels in Virginia in Revolutionary Times, ed. by A.J. Morrison, (Lynchburg, Va.: J.P. Bell Co., Inc., 1922), p. 63. Castiglioni was in Colchester on December 29, 1786.

3

Diary of Robert Hunter, Jr.: Quebec to Carolina in 1785-1786..., ed. by Louis B. Wright, (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, 1943), p. 189.

4

Kate Mason Rowland, "Merchants and Mills" from the Letterbook of Robert Carter of Nominy, Westmoreland County," William & Mary Quarterly, 1st series, XI (April 1903), 245.

5

Virginia Journal & Alexandria Advertiser. Peer's notice is on June 10, 1784, Gibson's on April 29, 1784, Brown's on November 30, 1786, and that of Huie & Reed on March 9, 1786.

6

Glassford, Records, #123:99.

7

Lewis, Famous Marines, p. 75.

8

Letter, Alexander Henderson to Robert Fergusson, August 29th and October 7, 1784; December 11, 1784, Manuscript Division, New York Historical Society. The Port Tobacco lots, retained by Henderson until 1814, are cited in Charles County (Maryland) Deed Book Z-3, p. 136, and JB-10, p. 545.

9

Washington, Writings, XXVII, 341.

10

Philip Slaughter, The History of Truro Parish in Virginia ..., ed. by Edward L. Goodwin, (Philadelphia: George W. Jacobs & Co., 1908), p. 96. The last vestry meeting was held on January 27, 1785.

11

Washington Post, February 28, 1962.

12

Letter, Henderson to Fergusson, February 7, 1787, dated Dumfries. New York Historical Society. Having sold most of his Colchester lots to William Thompson in 1779, Henderson's activities in Prince William County included service as a Burgess in 1798 (Slaughter, Truro Parish, p. 108) and membership in the Quantico Navigation Company in 1795 (Harrison, Landmarks, p. 396). He was a trustee of the town of Evansport at the mouth of the Creek (Prince William Guide, p. 88) but refused to serve as a justice for Prince William in 1791 (Calendar of State Papers, V, 280). His heirs paid taxes on two Colchester lots until 1840.

13

Alexandria Gazette, Commercial & Political, November 28, 1815.

14

Maryland Gazette, October 13, 1757.

15

Washington, Writings, XXVIII, 116.

16

Letter, Henderson to Fergusson, February 7, 1787. New York Historical Society.

17

Virginia Journal & Alexandria Advertiser, January 11, 1787.

18

Washington, Diaries, March 20, 1788. Snowden, Some Landmarks, p. 80, quoting an advertisement of this period.

19

Alexandria Daily Gazette, Commercial & Political, May 12, 1809; April 21, 1812 and October 19, 1812.

20

Harrison, Landmarks, p. 530. Snowden, Some Landmarks, p. 83, says that merchants' ledgers show evidence of postal service at Colchester as early as 1760 but gives no source. Alexander Henderson's ledgers give no information.

21

Harry M. Konwiser, Colonial and Revolutionary Posts: A History of the American Postal Systems, Colonial and Revolutionary Periods (Richmond, Va.: Press of the Dietz Printing Company, Publishers, 1931), p. 37, citing minutes of this meeting which he found in the Manuscript Division, New York Public Library.

22

Alexandria Gazette, June 24, 1872.

23

U. S. Postmaster-General, Annual Reports, 1790-1791, American State Papers, Post Office Department (Washington: Gales & Seaton, 1832-1861) pp. 10, 13.

24

The 1791 figures have been rounded off to the nearest dollar.

25

United States Post Office, Table of Post Offices in the United States with their distances from Washington City and the names of the Postmasters (Washington City: printed for the Postmaster General, 1811), p. 69.

26

Ibid., p. 14. Colchester was shown as being 26 miles from Washington.

27

Snowden, Some Landmarks, p. 83.

28

Alexandria Gazette & Daily Advertiser, June 11, 1818.

29

Mason, Papers, III, 891. June 1, 1787.

30

Virginia Gazette & Alexandria Advertiser, February 11, 1790; Columbian Mirror & Alexandria Gazette, October 2, 1800.

31

Fairfax County Deed Book W-2, p. 120.

32

These men are not on the tax list, nor in the deed book index.

33

Fairfax County Will Book J-1, p. 139. Estate account of William Huskins.

34

Thomas Jefferson Wertenbaker, The Old South: the Founding of American Civilization (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1942), p. 252.

35

Fairfax County Deed Book E-1, p. 40.

36

Alexandria Gazette, October 7, 1834.

37

United States Census of Manufactures, 1820, p. 240.

38

Smyth, Tour, p. 176.

39

Virginia Journal & Alexandria Advertiser, July 11, 1787; May 19, 1791.

40

Ibid., February 15, 1787; February 17, 1791.

41

Evening Star (Washington), August 1, 1920.

42

Middleton, Tobacco Coast, p. 60.

43

Maryland Gazette, October 5, 1758. The craft was: rigged with one mast, carries a main-sail and a fore-sail of Osnabrigs, with a Bumpkin, her stern painted green, has an Iron Horse, and a forecastle to the mast, her ballast consists of 12, fifty-sixes, some pig iron and stones, her stern sheets has been painted red, a locker aft, and two side lockers under the sheets, the entrance into which is round or oval holes before the after thaut, in which is kept two ox horns fixed with handles to wet the sails, she has an anchor and a common laid rope for a cable, is close sealed, the upper streak of which is painted red, and has two cleat blocks nailed for the foresheets, and a boom of juniper

44

Glassford, Records, #187:145; #186:172.

45

Fairfax County Deed Book R-1, p. 419.

46

William Wallace Bennett, Memorials of Methodism in Virginia, from its Introduction into the State, in the Year 1772, to the Year 1829 (2nd edit., Richmond: by the author, 1871), p. 299.

47

Washington, Diaries, IV, 56.

48

Mason, Papers, III, 1245. On April 11, 1793, the Dumfries Virginia Gazette & Agricultural Depository advertised Hooe's ferry across the Occoquan.

49

Hening, Statutes, XIII, 283.

50

Kate Mason Rowland, The Life of George Mason 1725-1792 (2 vols.; New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1892), I, 97; II, 307.

51

Journal of William Loughton Smith 1790-1791, ed. by Albert Matthews (Cambridge, Mass.: The University Press, 1913), p. 64.

52

Arthur G. Peterson, "The Alexandria Market Prior to the Civil War," William & Mary Quarterly, 2nd series, XII (April 1932), 104, 392.

53

Jedidiah Morse, The American Gazetteer (Boston: Isaiah Thomas and Ebenezer T. Andrews, 1797.)

54

Petition to the General Assembly of Virginia, December 8, 1797. Virginia State Library.

Chapter V

VOICES FROM THE PAST

As a new century began there was a poignant echo of an earlier day. When Captain John Smith mapped the Potomac in 1608 he depicted a "King's house" on the upper bank of the Occoquan River. In the vicinity of this long-vanished site, another English visitor observed the following incident in 1801:

On the north bank of the Occoquan is a pile of stones which indicates that an Indian warrior is interred underneath. The Indians from the back settlements, in traveling to the northward, never fail to leave the main road, and visit the grave of their departed hero. If a stone be thrown down they religiously restore it to the pile; and, sitting round the rude monument, they meditate profoundly; catching, perhaps, a local emotion from the place.

A party of Indians, while I was at Occoquan, turned from the common road into the woods to visit this grave on the bank of the river. The party was composed of an elderly Chief, twelve young War Captains, and a couple of Squaws. Of the women, the youngest was an interesting girl of seventeen; remarkably well shaped, and possessed of a profusion of hair, which in color was raven black. She appeared another such object as the mind imagines Pocohontas to have been.

The Indians being assembled round the grave, the old Chief rose with a solemn mien, and, knocking his war-club against the ground, pronounced an oration to the memory of the departed warrior The whole scene was highly dignified. The fierceness of his countenance, the flowing robe, elevated tone, naked arm, and erect stature, with a circle of auditors sitting on the ground and in the open air, could not but impress upon the mind a lively idea of the celebrated speakers of ancient Greece and Rome.

Having ended his oration, the Indian struck his war-club with fury against the ground, and the whole party obeyed the signal by joining in a war-dance - leaping and brandishing their knives at the throats of each other, and accompanying their menacing attitudes with a whoop and a yell, which echoed with ten-fold horror from the banks of the river ... it was scarcely finished, when the Chief produced a keg of whiskey The keg was soon emptied To complete the scene, the old warrior was uttering the most mournful lamentations over the keg he had emptied; inhaling its flavor with his lips, holding it out with his hands in a supplianting attitude, and vociferating to the bystanders. 'Scuttawawbah!

'Scuttawawbah!' More strong drink! More strong drink!'

Two years later another event occurred which must have been equally as impressive, if not quite so dramatic. What was most likely the last Indian burial in the neighborhood was reported by the Alexandria newspaper:

Died at Colchester on Saturday last, Col. John Ayers, a distinguished warrior of the Catawba Indian trade, who fought bravely for our Independence, as is certified by General Morgan and other officers... he had been on a visit to Washington; and on his return was taken with pleurisy and could get no farther than Colchester. He was attended by his nephew and grandson William Young and Ellick George, and everything necessary was provided for him by the liberality of the inhabitants of the neighborhood during his illness, the next day after his decease his body was interred after the manner of his nation and with the honors of war, attended by a large concourse of citizens.²

Chapter V Notes

1

Morrison, Travels in Virginia, p. 129, quoting John Davis's account.

2

Alexandria Daily Advertiser, February 1, 1803.

Chapter VI

THE DEATH OF A SMALL TOWN

Bridges on the Occoquan

The first town established within the present boundaries of Fairfax County was also one of the first to decline. Just as its location had been determined by the most suitable landing place for the ferry, so its function was dominated by the essential role played by that same public transport. After 1807, when the Occoquan River crossing was made upstream at Ellicott's bridge on the then main thoroughfare to the south, a basic reason for the existence of Colchester was no longer valid.

In 1793, John Hooe's ferry was operating two miles upstream from Colchester. A public road was open from Dumfries to Alexandria, which utilized the new crossing at this spot near the mills.¹ Hooe may not have consciously set out to destroy the town of Colchester, but he set in motion a chain of events which had a large part in bringing about this result. The bridge which replaced his ferry was built by Nathaniel Ellicott, owner of the Occoquan Mills, who subsequently obtained control of the stagecoach and mail contracts. This accomplished, he constructed a cutoff from the King's Highway north of Colchester and succeeded in diverting through traffic to this new route.

All this was not managed without opposition from the residents downstream.

Ellicott's opening move, publicized in the Columbia Mirror and Alexandria Gazette on May 23, 1795, was quickly countered on July 7th by Thomas Mason's proposal to build a toll bridge across the Occoquan from Colchester to his land in Prince William County. On December 17th the legislature passed acts allowing for the construction of both bridges. These were not to interfere with navigation on the Occoquan. The rate of toll was set at three cents for a man or a horse. Should the bridges not be completed by the end of 1798, the permit would be revoked. The same condition was to be in force if, after completion, either bridge proved to be "unfit for passage of anything."²

Mason's bridge was in use by January 2, 1798; the toll rate was set by the legislature. The cost was now six cents. Fare structure was similar to that for ferries:

coach, chariot, wagon and driver	=	6 horses
cart, 4-wheeled chaise and driver	=	4 horses
2-wheeled chaise or chair	=	2 horses
hogshead of tobacco	=	1 horse
one head of cattle	=	1 horse
each sheep, hog, etc.	=	1/5 the charge for a horse ³

Special arrangements were made that spring for mares to cross without paying toll if they were being sent to be bred by Young Sportsman, a horse owned by Thomas Mason's brother.⁴

No mention was made in the Act of 1798 of Ellicott's bridge, nor was it named in the 1804 legislature which increased the toll to eight cents. Col. John Hooe, the entrepreneur who started the rival ferry, seems to have been a completely defeated opponent in the transportation struggle at the Occoquan. He was drowned in the river near Colchester. Reporting his tragedy, the writer commented that "his previous dejection of Spirit, and conduct on the fatal morning, has given rise to an idea that he did it intentionally."⁵ We are not informed of the cause of Col. Hooe's despondency.

John Davis, the Englishman who was tutoring Ellicott's children at Occoquan, described the tavern at the end of the bridge and the Indian ceremony which took place not far away but his only mention of the structure itself was scant. The bridge, he wrote, was one "whose semi-elliptical arches are scarcely inferior to those of princely London."⁶ It was apparently a truss bridge.⁷ Both Thomas Mason's plantation and the present community of Woodbridge took their name from this distinguishing feature of the landscape.

Mason and his bridge, however, had but short lifespans. He died in 1800 leaving four children (one of whom was to be gruesomely murdered half a century later), 33 slaves, and an estate valued at £2760.⁸ His house survived until the 1870's but his bridge, although spoken of as "excellently strong and safe" in 1805, was carried away in a heavy rainstorm in August 1807.⁹ By this time through traffic had been diverted to the town of Occoquan and the bridge was not rebuilt.

An Interlude

While these serious changes were occurring a minor tempest received considerable local coverage in the Alexandria paper. On August 24, 1801, Walter Belt, a store-keeper in Colchester, inserted this notice:

Dr. James H. Blake of Colchester, having tried in an underhanded and most villainous manner to injure me, and will not give me satisfaction as a gentleman, I do, therefore, pronounce him a liar and a coward.

Dr. Blake, who was living in Ann Thompson's house¹⁰ (the present Fairfax Arms) at the time, seemed to be a substantial citizen. He later represented Fairfax County in the Virginia legislature.¹¹ Refusing to fight a duel, he quickly retorted that Belt's "infamous conduct must consign him to eternal infamy" and called him a "pusillanimous puppy" and "among the most degraded of the human species." Belt claimed that Dr. Blake had maligned his character and had insulted him further by refusing to fight. Dr. Blake defended himself against the charge of cowardice, saying that "the testimony of some of the most respectable characters in Maryland can ... prove that I have been unfortunately engaged as a principal in more duels than one" and repeating that he was not afraid of Mr. Belt.

William Huskins, who owned the tanyard, joined the letterwriters in support of Belt's forebearance:

I do hereby certify, that some time ago, I was insulted by Walter S. Belt, when I struck him several times, which he calmly received without resenting it.¹²

Huskins subsequently reversed his stand, declaring that Belt was a villain and a coward. Belt, in turn, rounded up nine "respectable men" to attest to his good character. "Just and honest, no disgrace can be attached to his reputation," wrote his neighbors.¹³ Support for Belt grew as a fellow merchant took a full page advertisement to defend him, but poor Belt was finally forced to close his store in Colchester where, according to his friend, "he has had, for thousands of dollars, sales over the last several years."¹⁴

In such fragmentary glimpses of everyday life in the past, the modern reader does not discover the entire story. The cause of the quarrel, which seemed to center around a lost pocketbook and a lady in Pohick churchyard, was never clearly stated and no one can tell whether Belt suffered unjustly. This minuscule drama does, however, offer a glimpse of human foibles which ordinarily receives no mention in formal history.

A New and Elegant Road

George Mason was concerned with the prospect of a new road which would replace the King's Highway. This discouraging possibility would mean bypassing his Colchester ferry. He regarded the proposal with disfavor, saying that "The Scheme of a new Road from Dumfries to Alexandria was originally, I believe, a Contrivance of Colo. Harry Lee's, to induce some Quakers, to whom he sold the Mills, to offer him a high price for some of his adjacent Lands."¹⁵

Although this road was not built during Mason's lifetime, it did materialize through the efforts of one of the Quakers at Occoquan Mills. On August 19, 1805, communication appeared in the Alexandria Daily Advertiser:

This day the mail stage from this place to Dumfries will commence running on the new road by Occoquan instead of the old route by Colchester. This new road leads off from the old road a little north of Pohic Church, crosses over Pohic Creek on a new and substantial bridge, passes through a well cultivated country to Occoquan, one of the most romantic, interesting places that can be conceived ...

Certain residents nearer the mouth of the Occoquan took this announcement as a straw in the wind. Within a fortnight one Alexander Gordon, "formerly tavern keeper at Woodbridge ... opened a house of entertainment at Occoquan Mills ... on Mr. Ellicott's new road ... a view of the different works at Occoquan will always be amusing to the stranger who has an hour to spare."¹⁶

Others vehemently opposed the route. A gentleman who signed himself "One of the Community" wrote a highly indignant letter, published on September 4th, maintaining that the mill road was three or four miles longer and certainly no better. "At each point where it has been taken from the post road, special pains have been bestowed to lead off

the unsuspicious stranger - a spacious avenue smooth as a bowling green invites him to enter and lest this should not be enough, a handsome signpost has been planted encroaching on the post road to keep it out of view." Once out of sight of the post road, the quality of the new route was not maintained.

The writer argued that the distance from Boston to Charleston was 1,162 miles and that if only half of the mill owners along the route followed Ellicott's example by routing travelers past their door, the resultant detours would add another 230 miles to the journey. The proprietor of the mills, he noted, also held the mail contract. His new road was not legally a post route, which the road through Colchester was designated, and the county court had refused to support it "because it benefited only Ellicott."

The new route was narrower, scarcely 18' wide, and descended so precipitously to Occoquan that vehicles were unable to pass. One such confrontation, when the stagecoach going downhill met a wagon coming up, created an impasse resolved only by unloading the wagon, removing the wheels and totally dismantling the body. In conclusion the writer further defended the Colchester crossing. "The only place on the post road which needs a bridge is at Colchester, and here travelers pass on an excellently strong and safe bridge 650' long."

"One of the community" did not, of course, have the last word. The first author extolled the virtues of the new route, calling it "the best road I ever saw," defending its width and safety, and claiming it cut 45 minutes from the stage time between Alexandria and Dumfries.

The only proper thing to measure roads by is the time it takes the traveller to pass them. If the new road is not so good as the old one and is farther, few will be found to travel it: if, on the contrary, the new road is found better, and can be travelled sooner and with more ease, (as is the case) the traveller will surely enter it, more especially when he reflects on the genteel reception he will meet with at Mr. Gordon's tavern at Occoquan; if, by the by, he has not first to obtain leave from the proprietor of the Colchester bridge and tavern.¹⁷

Although one can assume that the writer was not entirely disinterested, his opening argument has a curiously prophetic ring. How many drivers today choose, for example, the direct but traffic-clogged Route 1 between Alexandria and Dumfries rather than the swifter Interstate 95?

The change in the post route, claimed by the Occoquan faction as being left to the carrier's discretion rather than set by law, necessitated a side trip to deliver mail to the post office. Twice daily a boy on horseback traveled three miles from the nearest point on the post road for this purpose. Colchester's defender pointed out the inefficiency and danger of this practice. The warning proved justified when Mr. Ellicott (with what must have been considerable chagrin) placed this announcement in the paper:

MAIL LOST!

On Saturday, 16th November last, was lost from the Mail Stage, somewhere between Occoquan and Alexandria,

The Colchester Way-Mail

As this Mail could not have got out of the Stage without assistance, and that from design, I will give ONE HUNDRED DOLLARS REWARD, to any person who will inform me who committed the act of throwing the Mail out of the Stage on that day.¹⁸

With that final riposte the "new and elegant road" controversy vanished from the pages of the Alexandria newspaper.

Ellicott did win out. His bridge was damaged by the same storm which destroyed the Colchester bridge. It was repaired the following spring¹⁹ and the crossing at the Occoquan Mills continued to carry through traffic for many years. In 1811, the Occoquan Turnpike Company was chartered, with the enabling legislation leaving the choice of route open between the towns of Occoquan or Colchester as its southern terminus. An amendment in 1812 eliminated Colchester from consideration.²⁰

Not until 1916, when a new railroad bridge was built and the old one converted to vehicular traffic, did the Colchester route come back into use. In 1927, the present U.S. 1 was established, crossing the Occoquan on the former railroad bridge, and thus the mainstream of north-south traffic once again returned to the once-prominent route. The most recent highway, Interstate 95, bypasses both Occoquan and Colchester.

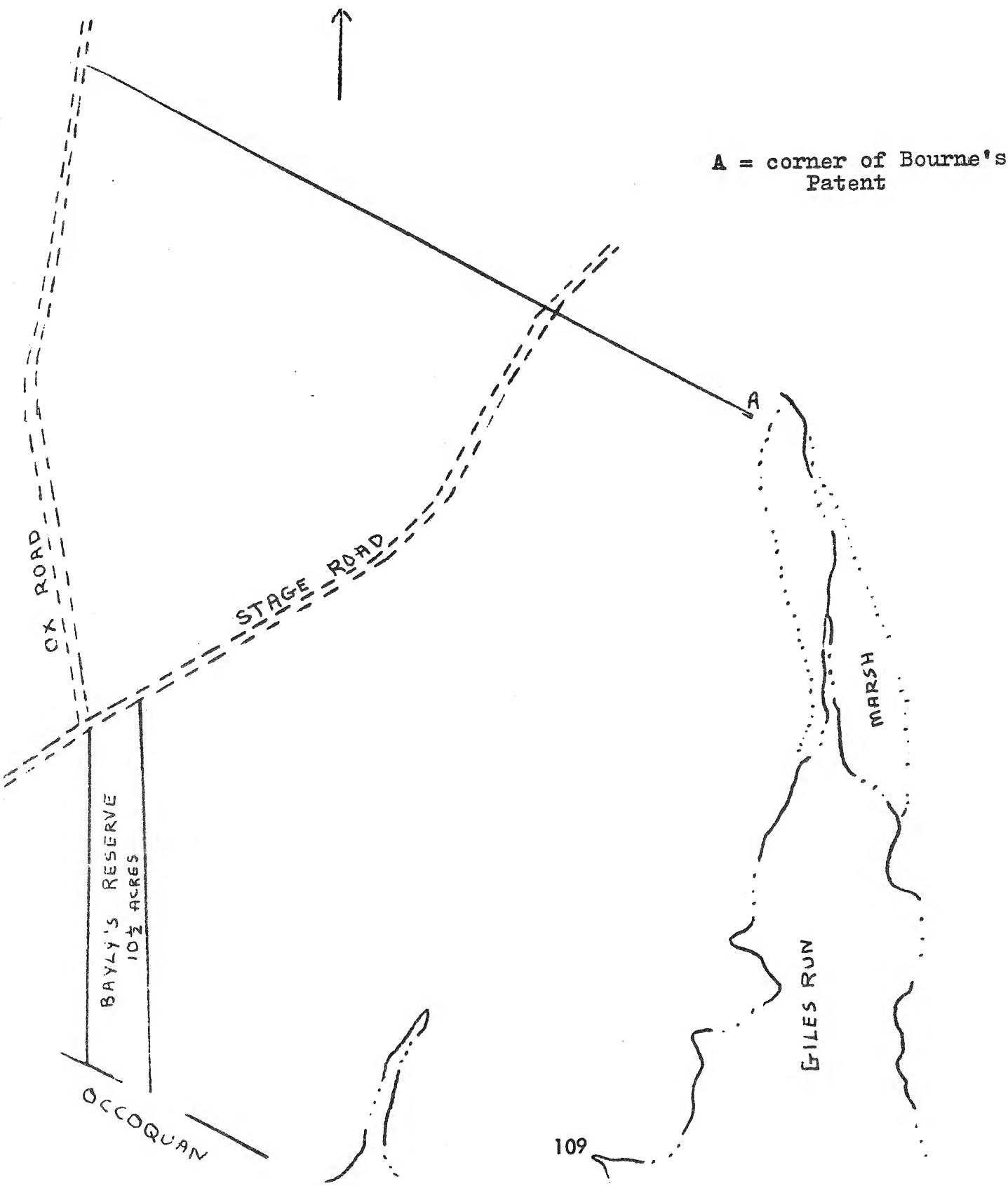
The Transition Into Farmland

Indicative of the changing status of the town is the fact that in 1814, when John Melish first issued his Travellers Directory showing the direct routes between major cities of the United States, the stage road from Washington to New Orleans was shown as passing Occoquan Creek rather than Colchester. The town is included, however, in his list of 12 towns in Virginia which were worthy of mention. Among these were Petersburg, Hampton, Portsmouth and Newcastle.²¹ By 1835, when Joseph Martin brought out his Gazetteer, Colchester was omitted entirely.

Some factors leading to the decline of the town have been examined - the flood which destroyed the bridge, the diversion of the main road and the subsequent closing of the post office. One writer has indicated that the 1807 flood also shifted the channel of the Occoquan, thus impeding loading of ships. He also mentions an epidemic of pleurisy²² as contributing to the population decline.

Sedimentation of the Occoquan certainly was one cause of Colchester's diminishing importance, as was the cessation of the flour trade down the overland route from the Shenandoah Valley and along Ox Road. As canal building gained impetus in the early nineteenth century it offered an easier means of transporting such goods to markets like Alexandria or Georgetown; the rising port of Baltimore also captured much of the trade from the hinterland. In 1815, the first regular steamboat service began on the Potomac,²³ offering direct water transport from Alexandria to the Fredericksburg area. This eliminated the necessity of using muddy roads and fording several streams along the stage route. In bad weather the road resembled a "Siberian Bog," with the mud above the horses' knees. Often the mail cart, pulled by four horses, could travel no faster than two miles in an hour.²⁴

BAYLY'S SALE OF LOWER HALF OF BOURNE'S PATENT
376 acres, less the $10\frac{1}{2}$ acre reserve (same tract sold in 1849 to
Potter & Allison)
John Ratcliffe Survey 1810
Fairfax County Deed Book L-2, p. 155.



Beside these changed conditions of trade and transportation, there is in addition a persistent tradition of a disastrous fire which burned most of the houses in Colchester. It is said that this occurred in 1815, although there is no mention in the Alexandria paper of such a catastrophe.²⁵ One resident, born in Colchester in 1898, stated that his grandmother had told his mother about the fire.²⁶ Details of the story vary but the accounts are consistent in attributing the blaze to one Lizzie (or Kizzie) Reardon. One version states that she turned over a lantern, just as the O'Leary's cow did in Chicago. Another tells of her difficulty in getting anyone to gather firewood led her to declare grimly that this was one night when she would have a glorious blaze.

The land tax records show that in 1817, when a valuation was first added for buildings, there were seven pieces of property in Colchester with structures upon them. The number dropped to five in 1829 and to two by 1835. This may be contrasted with 1797, when Morse's Gazetteer stated that Colchester contained about 40 houses.

Because these tax records, which began in 1782, never referred to town lots by plat numbers, changes in the ownership of specific lots can often be traced only by venturing an educated guess. This difficulty is compounded by the fact that after 1800 those deeds which were recorded rarely mentioned a lot by number; many deeds were oral transactions. Some were in record books which have disappeared. It is nearly impossible to draw an uninterrupted chain of title for any lot in the community.²⁷

Beginning with the year 1782, when 39 town lots were owned by 14 individuals, it is evident that two or three residents had multiple holdings. The ratio of taxable lots to numbers of owners was maintained up through the 1840's. By 1855, seven men controlled 31 lots; shortly after the Civil War three individuals owned all but four of the 30 lots still on the tax list. Colchester continued to be listed in the land tax books as a town until 1891, although its only appearance as such in the Federal Census records was for the year 1820.

In that census there were six families in the town. Only three of these appear in the tax books as owners of lots. It would seem that the census listing took in a wider neighborhood than the town proper. One lot owner, William Potter, had three lots (none with deeds recorded). He was engaged in some form of manufacturing and also in commerce. Elizabeth Bedenger probably lived on #24 and 40, purchased by her husband in 1803.²⁸ The third was Tholemiah Berry, whose town land consisted of five parcels. Of these, one was at the crossroads and adjacent to the town. Two town lots were unimproved and two had buildings assessed at a total value of \$360.²⁹

Berry had in 1813 purchased the 365 $\frac{1}{2}$ acres formerly owned by the Bayly family, which comprised the lower half of the original seventeenth century patent. The upper half remained in the hands of the Wagener family until after the Civil War. Before his death around 1825 Berry agreed to sell his acreage to James Potter and John Allison; the tract was divided in half but no deed was recorded until after Allison's death in 1849.³⁰ Potter's half was the southwest quarter of the early patent. It abutted a 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ acre strip along the east line of the town. He subsequently acquired this strip and rights to four other town lots.³¹ By 1861, he had nine lots and 213 acres of land nearby.³²

The total population in 1820 consisted of 21 males, 15 females and 14 slaves. Not all these people lived within the town limits.

In 1831, a new resident, Lewis Weston, bought lot #15, originally owned by Alexander Henderson and sold to Hector Ross in 1761. Weston paid taxes in 1832 on buildings valued at \$250. The property is owned by his descendants and the dwelling, much altered, seems to stand on earlier stone foundations. Weston purchased six additional lots before 1855. He owned 15 acres near the crossroads on the present Furnace Road, and 100 acres on Massey Creek where the Harbor View subdivision is located.³³

Lewis Weston played a part in a dramatic event which occurred on December 19, 1849.³⁴ One morning he crossed to Woodbridge, seeking to borrow a canoe from Gerard Mason, and discovered his neighbor's blood-spattered body on the bed in the old Mason ferry house. "I see him lying there and the blood all around him," testified Weston at the inquest. George Mason's grandson was fully clothed except for his shoes. There was no sign of a scuffle, nor any blood on the blankets, but one ear hung loose and blood and brain matter running out of his head had soaked the thick feather bed and dripped onto the floor. "It was his habit to lie down with his overcoat on," Weston said, "the deceased takes lolls through the day at different times."

T. M. Gossom, who had spent the night with Mason, stated that the victim had risen before dawn to climb the hill to the slave quarters. "He said 'get up and put on your young legs and go' - I put on my clothes. There was whiskey in a decanter and deceased said I must drink with him - he went in the cellar and drew more whiskey" Agnes, one of his slaves, had attacked Mason with an axe. Explanations varied from self-defense to attempted rape. Another witness testified that Agnes, after the first blow, "thought she would give another lick and put him out of his misery" and claimed that Mason had tried to shoot her.

The murder caused great excitement in the area. Some landowners saw it as a conspiracy; others pled for clemency. The Governor received petitions for clemency and other petitions asking for a death penalty. After a two month suspension, Agnes was executed the following July and the State of Virginia paid \$450 to the executors of the deceased's estate to reimburse the valuation placed upon his slave.³⁵ After the aroused feelings among abolitionists and proslavery forces had simmered down, the neighborhood once again lapsed into uneasy peace until the outbreak of the Civil War.

Chapter VI Notes

1

Dumfries Virginia Gazette & Agricultural Depository, April 11, 1793.

2

Shepherd, Statutes, I, 429 (Ellicott's charter), 430 (Mason's).

3

Ibid., II, 119.

4

Columbian Mirror & Alexandria Gazette, April 14, 1798.

5

Ibid., May 17, 1798.

6

Davis, Travels, p. 267.

7

Harrison, Landmarks, p. 496.

8

Prince William County Will Book I-1, p. 123. Thomas Mason's inventory includes material from the bridge. A description of the stone ruins of Mason's house appeared in "With the Rambler," Evening Star (Washington), July 4, 1920.

9

Alexandria Daily Advertiser, August 15, 1807.

10

Alexandria Advertiser & Commercial Intelligencer, October 21, 1802. Ann Thompson was renting the house and stated that it was "formerly a tavern, now occupied by Dr. Blake."

11

Alexandria Daily Advertiser, April 14, 1804.

12

Alexandria Advertiser & Commercial Intelligencer, September 1, 1801.

13

Ibid., September 15, 1801.

14

Ibid., September 22, 1801.

15

Mason, Papers, III, 1245.

16

Alexandria Daily Advertiser, August 30, 1805.

17

Ibid., September 14, 1805.

18

Ibid., December 11, 1805.

19

Ibid., August 15, 1807; May 20, 1808. On May 12, 1809, Ellicott advertised the stage line and mail contract for sale.

20

Harrison, Landmarks, p. 592. Andrew Bartle, bridgebuilder, announced in the Alexandria Gazette & Daily Advertiser on November 21, 1818, that he planned to petition the legislature to build a toll drawbridge at Occoquan.

21

John Melish, The Travellers' Directory Through the United States containing a Description of all the Principal Roads through the United States with Copious Remarks on the Rivers, and other Subjects..., (new edit.; Philadelphia: Published by the author, 1822), p. 44. The first edition appeared in 1814.

22 Snowden, Some Landmarks, pp. 81, 82.

23

Alexandria Gazette, Commercial & Political, June 1, 1815. The first steamboat on the Potomac reached Alexandria on May 30, taking 29 hours to travel from Norfolk. On the 29th the paper reported that the ship Washington, Captain O'Neale, "destined for the Potomac," had traveled from New York in 50 hours.

24

Phenix Gazette (Alexandria), February 14, 1832.

25

Snowden, Some Landmarks, p. 82.

26

Interview with Mr. Arthur Beach of Colchester, son of John Stonewall Beach. September 1971.

27

Statement of Courtland Davis, title examiner, in suit of Williams v. Seidell. See Ch. II, notes #43.

28

Fairfax County Deed Book E-2, p. 58.

29

Fairfax County Deed Book U-2, p. 219. Berry's lot adjacent to town was described by previous owner John Mills in the Virginia Gazette (Dixon) on July 10, 1779, as "lying on the corner of two streets, in a good situation for business" and having a "neat, well finished storehouse and stable." Mills died in 1784 and his executors sold the lot to the firm of Hooe & Harrison. Next occupied by Lund Washington, Jr., it was sold by James Hooe to Berry in 1823.

Berry in 1819 was taxed for four lots, formerly belonging to Thomas Parsons and Cornelius Welles. Both of these men had tavern licenses from 1815 to 1818. According to the 1817 tax list Parsons was then living in Washington. A deed from Parsons to Berry is indexed in missing Fairfax County Deed Book Q-2, p. 146; this may be for lot #22, purchased by Parsons in 1808 (J-2, p. 75).

No deeds are indexed for Welles, who paid taxes 1813-1818 on a lot with buildings valued at \$230.

30

Fairfax County Deed Book L-2, p. 155 and M-2, p. 282. Two tracts, totaling 17 acres were not included in the purchase. The Court Order Book in November 1825 noted that Mary Berry was made executor of her father's estate. In this capacity she sold the acreage to Potter and the Allisons, in Deed Book R-3, p. 147. John Allison died on January 15, 1849 (see Allison v. Reardon, Suspended file #1, Chancery Cases); the deed was dated August 25, 1849.

31

Fairfax County Deed Book W-2, p. 293; U-3, p. 191.

32

Ibid., U-3, p. 192; R-3, p. 146.

33

Ibid., F-4, p. 259 divides seven lots and two houses between the five Weston children. M-4, p. 173, 242; O-4, p. 259; Q-4, p. 264 are the deeds from the other heirs to John Weston.

34

Alexandria Gazette, December 23, 1849.

35

Depositions at the trial of Commonwealth v. Agnes and supporting material is filed in the Virginia State Library under the Executive Papers of Governor Floyd, also in Auditors Item #153, Slaves Executed and Transported 1845-1857.

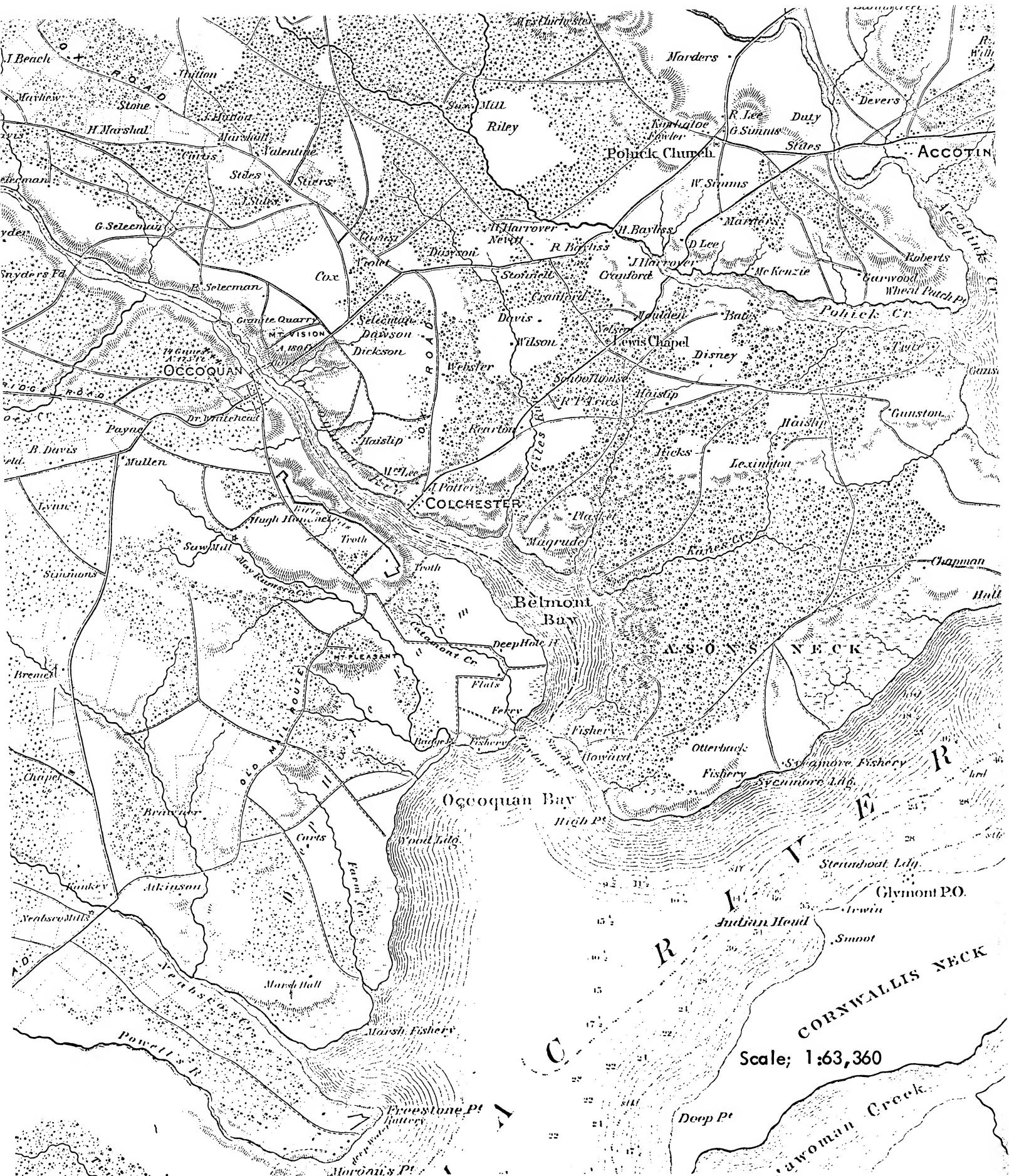


Figure 20. Surveys for Military Defenses. Topographic Engineers Office, January 11, 1862

Chapter VII

THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY

A Battle on the Occoquan Last Night

Although the Colchester area was largely bypassed during the events taking place along the Occoquan River in the early part of the Civil War, it was the scene of an occasional skirmish. When the Potomac was blockaded by Confederate forces in the winter of 1861-1862 a legion of Colonel Wade Hampton's Brigade had a battery at Colchester. On December 12, 1861, the U.S.S. Harriet Lane shelled a foraging party two miles above Occoquan Bay. The ship Stepping Stones went into the Occoquan to reconnoitre and "was fired at with musketry and some field pieces, which was returned from a howitzer. The vessel was hit by two or three musket balls only; got three miles up the creek ... in 4½ feet of water."¹

On the 20th Lieutenant Wyman, of the Potomac Flotilla, reported:

I have been informed ... that a gunning sloop has been in the habit of passing around into the Occoquan, and selling whiskey...

I am informed that the enemy's force does not extend on this side of the Occoquan River, but that they have built a fort a short distance below the Occoquan Mills.

A line of rifle pits is shown on the 1862 map.

One incident in January 1862 received wide, if contradictory, newspaper coverage. The Washington Evening Star reported on the 29th that there had been a battle between 50 men of the 37th New York and a group of Texas Rangers at Mrs. Lee's house (the Wagener homestead) at the head of Belmont Bay. According to the Star, it was "the most desperate and bloody engagement that has so far marked the history of the war." Fighting continued until all but one of the Rangers were dead; the northern loss was one killed and four wounded. "Both parties, too, stood up with equally unflinching courage; but one of the whole rebel detachment failing to sacrifice his life in the affair."²

According to the Alexandria Local News, the engagement had taken place at Mr. Potter's house. He was first reported killed, then a prisoner. The paper quoted an account from the New York Herald saying that Colonel Burke of the 37th had left his picket post near the village of Accotink and gone to Colchester. "The village," stated the Herald, "consists of about half a dozen dwellings. The two houses in question were on each side of the Colchester Road one hundred and fifty yards from the Occoquan." Colonel Burke said that Mrs. Lee's house was under fire for 90 minutes. Another article steadfastly maintained that Potter's house was the scene of the fighting and that the confederates were having a dance at the time.³



Figure 21. Gilbert Thompson sketch of an old tobacco house near the James River, 1863. Library of Congress.



Figure 22. Gilbert Thompson sketch of bivouac at Colchester Ferry, 1863. Library of Congress.

The Richmond Examiner's, account⁴ called it "a very spirited and gallant little affair" in which "eight Texas soldiers succeeded in putting to flight a body of fifty or sixty yankees."

A subsequent report from the Philadelphia Inquirer took the position that the Texas Rangers were not on the scene at all, but that a party of longboat men were having "a drinking frolic and stag-dance." The Alexandria paper concluded philosophically, "Certainly there have been strange stories, pro and con."

Scouting parties regularly swept through the area but most of the activity that winter took place at the crossroads at Pohick Church and at the town of Occoquan. In March Colonel Hampton reported that Union troops had attacked his pickets at Colchester and that he and the legion repelled them.⁵

On June 15, 1863, Gilbert Thompson's unit was ordered to construct a pontoon bridge across the Occoquan:

About 10 clk A.M. C&D moved down to Colchester Ferry, about two miles, and built a bridge of 27 boats, assisted by the 50th New York who have left us and we are sole possessors. It is quite a pleasant situation, though not so wild as above. Some wagons, three siege ... and a large number of horses ... Our train has crossed above ... no news, no noise. It was with no considerable management that the horses were got across without straining the bridge, the most feasible way was to take two oars and cross them and walk quietly and firmly in front; but the amusing part of it was this; one head was led off by one solid, old battery horse, who though gaunt in limb, showed his drills. Two men took one oar between them to lead off when the old veteran put his breast against the oar and resolutely pushed him steadily before, they holding back with all their power. It made a great laugh.⁶

Thompson's sketch of the scene shows the old Mason ferry house on Prince William shore, as well as the bridge.

The Coming of the Railroad

In 1871, construction began on a rail link between Alexandria and Fredericksburg, then the only gap in the line from New York to Tallahassee, Florida. Attempts had been made for many years to build a railroad in this part of Virginia. In 1832, a route was proposed from Fredericksburg northward to the steamboat landing on Potomac Creek. A distance of eight miles was surveyed and subscription books opened by the Fredericksburg & Potomac Creek Railroad Company. It was estimated that a single track could be built for \$50,000. The range of 238 feet in elevation on the line, reported the engineer in charge, "will, in all probability, preclude the employment of locomotive engines, but will afford no obstacle to horse power, by which the distance can be accomplished in one hour."⁷ Plans were being made at the same time for a line from Baltimore to Washington; from there a steamboat would transport travelers to Potomac Creek. Travel by stagecoach between Alexandria and Fredericksburg at that time required two days if the journey were made in the winter.⁸

Proposals were modified "to make for the present merely a good road, and to send to England for a locomotive engine to run on it."⁹ In 1834, the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad was chartered. Residents of the town of Occoquan recommended at that time that the proposed railway should run through their town.¹⁰ In three years time track was laid from Richmond to Fredericksburg; a later extension went north to Potomac Creek.

The rails advanced no farther until after the Civil War, although in 1864 the Alexandria and Fredericksburg Railway Company (incorporated in 1851) attempted to take over the charter. The newcomers raised \$40,000 by selling \$2.00 stock shares and let a contract to Bodfish, Mills & Company. This contractor went bankrupt and no further action was taken until 1870.¹¹

At that time the Pennsylvania Railroad, the Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac, and the Baltimore & Potomac all tried to secure the charter. Enabling legislation was passed by Congress so that the Baltimore & Potomac might extend a line from Washington to Richmond, but this company finally chose an alternate route through Southern Maryland to Popes Creek on the Potomac River (in Charles County, Maryland). They then hoped to construct a line across the river in King George County, Virginia, which would extend to Richmond.¹²

In the ensuing power struggle the Alexandria & Fredericksburg Railway, controlled by the Pennsylvania Railroad, was the victor. A survey line was run in July and in December 1870, Charles McFadden of Philadelphia was given a contract to build the section from Chappawamsic in Prince William County, Virginia, to a point in Fairfax County one and one-half miles beyond Colchester. "Mr. McFadden," reported the Alexandria Gazette, "has already purchased lumber in this city and erected substantial shanties near Colchester for the accommodation of the large forces of laborers he intends to put to work at once." By the end of the month he had broken ground at Colchester and had a force of 50 men making cuts across Lewis Weston's farm.¹³

On January 19, 1871, the newspaper said that "a large force of laborers at work, and active operations are in progress on about fifteen miles of line, running both ways from Colchester. Five miles are reported to be ready for ties now." Across the Potomac, the Baltimore & Potomac Railroad Company was grading their Charles County route, while from Fredericksburg the Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac was working on the line north to Quantico.¹⁴

Inclement weather closed navigation on the river and slowed preparations for grading. The Chief Engineer of the Alexandria & Fredericksburg, J.V. Crawford, may have been optimistic in saying that the work would be complete by July. Meanwhile the enforced idleness of the workmen, cooped up in their shanties, led to several fights. It may have been the memory of these outbreaks that gave the town of Colchester its reputation as a place "of unpleasant notoriety."¹⁵

In March, H. K. Bradshaw of Alexandria was awarded the contract for the bridge over the Occoquan River. This was to be a trestle structure and may have been constructed in the same manner as the Long Bridge at Washington. At that spot bunches of piles were driven two feet below water level and 12x12's set on the piles in a crisscross pattern just below the low water mark. Much of the timber for the trestle came from the lumber mill at Accotink.¹⁶ A granite quarry near Fredericksburg and the freestone quarry on Aquia

Creek provided stone for footings.¹⁷

Two stone footings from this first railroad bridge are still in place. The one now visible is of a red color and may be Seneca sandstone; the other, on the shore, has a 12 foot jacket of concrete around it. This encapsulation was done about 1959, at the time when a third pier was replaced by a steel footing.¹⁸

Grading for the railroad was not complete until the middle of July 1871. The bridges were said to be "in rapid process of construction" at that time and the line ready for ties and rails.¹⁹ Despite the optimism of the chief engineer, it was not until the spring of 1872 that the bridge over the Occoquan was completed. "The first of several fine depot buildings to be established on the line of the Alexandria & Fredericksburg Railroad has been erected, together with a commodious water tank, capable of holding 10,000 gallons, ... and will be known as Long Branch Station; the buildings are first class in every respect. The bridge over the Occoquan has nearly been completed," the Gazette report on April 1st. On the 13th a train left Alexandria with a group of officials for a trial run across the new structure. One of the guests sent in an account of the trip:

On the morning of the 13th instant a party of gentlemen left Alexandria upon a construction train for the purpose of making the first trial trip across the high bridge and trestle at Occoquan and thereby testing the solidity of the work ... After a rapid and pleasant run of seventeen miles they reached the rubicon, and locomotive No. F, thickly crowded with railroad men, steamed slowly across, while the whistle snorted exultingly "Onward to Richmond." Its arrival upon the southern bank was enthusiastically greeted by a goodly gathering of the citizens of Prince William County, and a number of fair ladies attested their faith in the safeness of the structure by accompanying the bold pioneers on their return. After crossing and recrossing several times at a slow rate of speed, the engineer pulled the throttle wide open... The bridge is nearly a quarter of a mile in length and 75 feet above the water in Occoquan creek, so as to allow of the easy passage of all shipping underneath, and thus obviate the necessity of having a drawbridge. The engineers tested the deflection under load and pronounced it to be entirely satisfactory...²⁰

That summer must have been a busy one for such excursions. A gentleman who signed himself "Viator" wrote"

A few days ago, in company with one of the City Fathers, I took a jaunt by the new railroad, to what was once the venerable port of Colchester... The new railroad bridge at Colchester ... is a beautiful and substantial structure, resting on red sand stone piers 72 feet above the surface of the water. Colchester is beautifully situated, having a fine view of the Potomac several miles below. Some century, or more ago, considerable business in tobacco, &c., was done there ... While at Colchester we saw the Little Thunder, with a wheel behind her, rushing up under the high bridge ...

It was a great mistake in the people of old to build on the small streams, as at Dumfries, Colchester, Bladensburg, &c; but ships were much smaller in those days, and the folks of old were not to blame for not being prophets.²¹

Dredging Operations on the Occoquan

If the early inhabitants had been prophets, a great amount of money would have been saved. A survey made in 1872 by the U. S. Corps of Engineer estimated the cost of a five foot channel to be \$18,095 if dredged to a width of 100 feet. The existing channel had depths ranging from five to 25 feet, but it was blocked by two mudflats below the railroad bridge. The mean rise and fall of the tide was about three feet.

A cut through the upper mudflat, half a mile below the bridge, was made in 1871. Residents of Occoquan had spent \$600 on this project; because it was badly located and too narrow, the result was unsatisfactory.²²

Like other early port towns built near the head of navigation, Occoquan and Colchester were victims of the sedimentation caused by soil erosion. This was the case over the entire shoreline of the Chesapeake Bay; the average depth of the water near its head had reduced by 2½ feet between 1846 and 1938. This figure does not, of course, take into account the vast amount of sediment deposited before that time. The town of Joppa, Maryland, once a colonial port, was two miles from navigable water in 1945.²³ Port Tobacco, Maryland, was in 1882 4,800 feet beyond the head of navigation; of this distance 1,800 feet had filled in since 1862. At the beginning of the nineteenth century vessels of a six foot draft could still get up to the town itself, although the creek had been deeper during the colonial period.²⁴

On the Virginia side of the Potomac on Quantico Creek, siltation had filled in a 60 foot wide, 4-5 foot deep canal built shortly after 1796. By 1905, this was a ditch only one foot deep and of half its original width. Neabsco Creek was once navigable nearly to the point where it is crossed by U. S. Route 1.²⁵ During the 1870's Neabsco, Aquia, Accotink and Occoquan Creeks were dredged but improvement was temporary. In Occoquan alone over \$95,000 was appropriated by the Corps of Engineers between 1873 and 1910.²⁶ The enormous expense made it impossible to justify the maintenance of channels into all of the numerous former ports around the Chesapeake Bay. Only Baltimore has remained a major port: dredging there in the 1815-1831 period cost half a million dollars.²⁷

Operations at Occoquan involved cutting a 50 foot channel, five feet deep, through the Lower Mud Bar in 1873-1874, making a cut ten feet wider through the Upper Mud Bar the following year, and in 1875-1876 dredging an 80 foot wide channel from the railroad bridge up to the town of Occoquan. By the time this was done, the channel at the mouth of the river had begun to fill in and had to be dredged again. In 1878-1879, the bar at the mouth off Sandy Point was again cut through, while in 1880 part of a pile dike was built opposite the wharf at the town of Occoquan. A riprap was built later and logs and snags removed.²⁸

The Effect on the Local Economy

When William Popp made his first engineering report in 1872 he noted that trade in the river was carried on by two 50-ton shallow draught sternwheelers. Heavy timber, railroad ties and granite from the quarry was carried, as well as barrels and flour. All products had to be trans-shipped at Alexandria due to the shallow channel of the

Occoquan. The trade totaled about \$40,000 yearly and included some 16,000 bushels of wheat and 6,000 bushels of corn. "Colchester," he observed, "has also a considerable trade with Alexandria and Washington, especially in firewood."

Attached to his report was a letter from Occoquan residents describing their town of 300 population and giving their annual shipments:

Flour	3500 barrels
Mill offal	6000 bushels
Cord Wood	15,000-20,000 cords
Flour barrels	30,000-40,000
Fish barrels	2,000-3,000
Cedar posts	10,000-30,000
Hogshead poles	150,000-200,000
Barrel Hoops	25,000-50,000
Sumac	20,000-25,000 pounds ²⁹

This list may be compared with another set of statistics covering trade between 1891 and 1896 (given in tonnage):

<u>Articles</u>	<u>1891</u>	<u>1892</u>	<u>1894</u>	<u>1895</u>	<u>1896</u>
Flour & grain	60	550	900	1400	1200
Coal	100	100	100	100	100
Fertilizers				200	
Lumber	600	890	320	200	300
Piles			1000	100	2150
Railroad ties	3600	3000	3000	2500	7000
Sand		48,000		5000	23,400
Wood	3500	3600	2400	750	7120
Miscellaneous	345	655	580	325	410
	<u>8,205</u>	<u>56,705</u>	<u>8,900</u>	<u>10,475</u>	<u>41,070</u>

In 1896, the reporting officer also summarized the arrivals and departures of vessels in the Occoquan River. Of barges and flatboats there were 808, 96 sailboats and 614 vessels with less than a ten foot draft. "The work done has lessened the cost of shipping, since vessels can now load more heavily at the wharves, formerly part of the cargo had to be taken out to them in lighter draft boats," concluded the report.³⁰

The Close of the Century

The Colchester area continued its rural character after the Civil War, with the former town lands remaining in the hands of three farmers as they had since the 1850's. Both James Potter and Lewis Weston died about 1865. The Weston heirs retained title

to seven lots, John Weston acquiring the rights of his two sisters and two brothers.³¹ Potter left two sons and one daughter. His town lots, nine in number, had been forfeit in 1866 for nonpayment of taxes but were regained by his sons in 1869.³² Like John Weston, Joseph Potter continued to pay taxes through 1890. After this time the tax records no longer listed land in Colchester as town lots. The third bloc, consisting of the ten lots acquired by 1854 by John Hughes,³³ was inherited by his son George Thomas Hughes. The guardian (Potter Trice) of young Hughes sold three of the lots in 1872 and Hughes himself sold three more in 1881. Four lots were kept through 1890.³⁴ Of the remainder of the town lots, taxes were still being paid on only four others, all unimproved.³⁵

It was still possible in 1881 to find throngs of swans downstream where the Occoquan entered the Potomac.

The waters about the mouth of the Occoquan are the favorite feeding haunts of the swan. This noble bird also frequents the river for a distance of forty miles below. In early days the swan resorted hither in flocks of several hundred, and might be seen floating gracefully on the waters, their white plumage at a distance resembling the driven snow, and in the evenings their sonorous notes could be heard for several miles. Their size and immense ... the swan remains in the river during the entire winter.³⁶

Another sight pointed out to excursion parties aboard the steamboat Arlington was the old colonial town. In 1874, the Alexandria Library Company advertised such a trip to raise funds:

Up to a short time ago there was no way of getting to Occoquan except by private conveyance, which was why it was not more frequented by excursion parties ... in going, you pass by the old town of Colchester, one of the first settled towns of Virginia, the remains of which can still be seen, and pass under the magnificent bridge of the Fredericksburg Railroad.³⁷

During the summer there were tournaments held at Woodbridge with local knights tilting their lances and queens of love and beauty, or performances on the tightrope. On board ship "Good music will be in attendance."³⁸

Occasionally an even more exciting event might take place, such as the launching of the sternwheeler built at Occoquan in 1873 or the sale of the sidewheeler Arlington at that place in 1879. This ship of the Occoquan Line was 109 feet long, 25 feet wide, and drew 2½ to four feet of water. It could thus use the dredged channel up to the town and could transport 50 tons of freight. More dramatic, perhaps, would be the Voodoo doctress practicing near Pohick Church or, in 1879, the arrival of Henry Tudor. That gentleman was traveling from New York. He spent the night in Colchester during his journey on horseback to Patagonia at the far tip of South America.³⁹

Periodically the railroad bridge needed repair. One of the piers was fixed in 1873 by the Keystone Bridge Company. The job had to be done hastily. "As the bridge is 75 feet high, pedestrians will not now attempt to cross it."⁴⁰ Floodwaters in 1877,

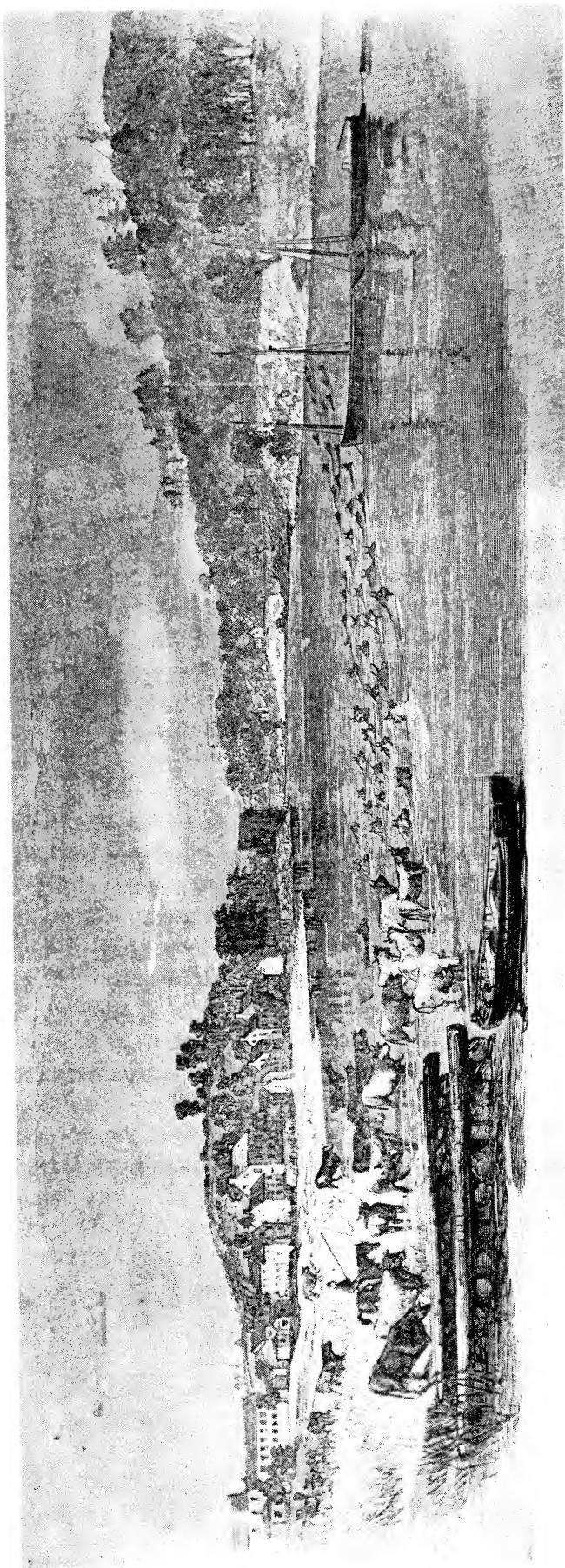
1881 and 1889 so damaged the wooden trestle that plans were made in 1892 to replace it with an iron structure, "which, when completed, they say, will be a beautiful piece of work."⁴¹ The Alexandria & Fredericksburg had in 1890 been consolidated with the Alexandria & Washington to form a new company known as the Washington-Southern Railroad. Under their auspices the iron bridge was built. A plan was also proposed in 1898 to run a branch line of track from Woodbridge to the town of Occoquan. Officials of the Pennsylvania Railroad visited there in August and ordered a survey made but nothing further was done.⁴²

In 1894, Professor Samuel Langley of the Smithsonian Institution placed his experimental aircraft on a railroad car and transported it to Occoquan Bay. There it was put on a scow for testing over the water. Langley and Dr. Barnoss, his assistant, "adjusted the mechanism to its supporting frame . . . like a monstrous swan it jumped into the air." The aluminum craft was ten feet in length and shaped like a porpoise.⁴³

Three years later the first joint annual meeting of the Prince William Education Association and the historical societies of Prince William, Fairfax County and Alexandria was held in Occoquan. The picnic lunch was served at the site of the iron furnace before the group boarded the steamer Alton for the trip downstream to Colchester.

A HISTORIC PICNIC

There gathered Saturday on the historic banks of the Occoquan river, the site of the ancient town of Colchester, under the auspices of the Prince William Educational Association, an assemblage novel in character - a historic picnic, the first of a series designed to encourage the present generation to study the past . . . The assemblage was very large and embraced many leading citizens of Fairfax and Prince William counties, a great number of ladies also attending. At three o'clock the town hall of Occoquan was filled and the assemblage was called to order by M. D. Hall, school superintendent of Fairfax county. Mr. S. M. Janney made an address of welcome to the visitors. Music entertained the gathering and then Mr. Wm. H. Snowden, of Arcturus, read a history of the vanished town, making a life-like picture of the Colchester of other days. Mr. George C. Round read "Marianne of Bell-Aire," a romance of an old village of Prince William county. It is the intention of the Prince William Educational Association to hold historic picnics at the sites of all the old colonial towns of that region. The next gathering of the kind will be held next August at Dumfries, another ancient port of entry in Prince William County.⁴⁴



Chapter VII Notes

1

U. S. War Department, The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (128 vols.; 1st ser.; Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880-1910), V, 4,5.

2

Ibid., p. 8.

3

Local News (Alexandria), January 31, 1862. This sheet was published from October 15, 1861, to February 10, 1862. In May the Alexandria Gazette resumed publication.

4

The Democratic Recorder (Fredericksburg), February 4, 1862, quoting the Richmond paper.

5

Local News (Alexandria), February 1, 1862, quoting the Philadelphia paper. The final comment appeared on February 4th. Official Records, V, 529, 950.

6

Gilbert Thompson, Diary, p. 169. Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

7

Phenix Gazette (Alexandria), April 12, 1832.

8

Ibid., December 24, 1833.

9

Ibid., August 8, 1832.

10

Alexandria Gazette, January 12, 1835.

11

Ibid., January 19, 1871.

12 Ibid., July 6, 1870.

13 Ibid., July 23, December 17, 30, 1870.

14 Ibid., January 18, 1871.

15 Ibid., January 27, 28, 1871. Birch, Recollections, p. 9.

16 Dorothy Troth Muir, Potomac Interlude: The Story of Woodlawn Mansion and the Mount Vernon Neighborhood 1846-1943 (Washington: Mount Vernon Print Shop, 1943), p. 131. Alexandria Gazette, March 10, 1871.

17 Alexandria Gazette, July 21, 1871.

18 Interview with Mr. Elmer Metzger, September 1971. He worked on the concrete capping.

19 Alexandria Gazette, July 15, 17, 1871.

20 Ibid., April 15, 1872, quoting the Washington Chronicle. A century later the neighborhood viewed another innovation when the first Auto-Train, with its northern terminus at Lorton, Virginia, made its maiden run to Florida (Evening Star, December 7, 1971).

21 John B. Mordecai, A Brief History of the Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac Railroad (Richmond: Old Dominion Press, 1941), p. 44, states that the line was completed to Quantico by July 2, 1872. Alexandria Gazette, June 24, 1872.

22 U. S. Congress, Senate, River and Harbor Reports, S. Exec. Doc. 25, 42nd Cong., 3rd sess., 1872, p. 193. A 4' channel would cost \$10,400. In Virginia, legislation to improve navigation on the Occoquan was introduced in 1815.

23 L. C. Gottschalk, "The Effects of Soil Erosion on Navigation in the Upper Chesapeake Bay," The Geographical Review, XXXV (April 1945), p. 219-237.

24

U. S. War Department, Annual Report, Report of the Chief of Engineers, 1884 (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1884), pt. 2, p. 1008.

25

Gottschalk, "Soil Erosion," p. 231.

26

U. S. War Department, Index to Reports of the Chief of Engineers 1866-1912, Vol. I, Rivers and Harbors (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1915), p. 390. Summary of appropriations, estimates, contracts, etc., for work on the Occoquan.

27

Gottschalk, "Soil Erosion," p. 237.

28

U. S. War Department, Rivers and Harbors, p. 391.

29

U. S. Corps of Engineers, Roads and Canals (104 vols.; Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1789-1971), LXXXVIII, (1872), #17, p. 39.

30

U. S. War Department, Annual Report, Report of the Chief of Engineers, 1897 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1897), part 2, 1323.

31

The deeds are cited in Chapter VI, Note 33.

32

Fairfax County Deed Book J-4, pp. 27, 497. The deed back to Joseph Potter said a list of lots sold for taxes was filed in the State Auditor's Office, but this could not be located in the Auditor's files at the Virginia State Library.

33

Land tax records show John Hughes, in 1854, owning one lot formerly Reardon and Beard's, with buildings worth \$125 (#19?, bought from Cruse in 1829, in Deed Book U-3, p. 466). Two lots formerly Wagener's and then Daniel and Mary Lee's, may have been #21 and 23. Six lots had formerly belonged to Thompson Clarke. (The 1835 tax list shows that Clarke had two lots acquired from Bowen, perhaps #6 and 42, and three former Wagener lots acquired from Sinah Porter, Deed Book A-3, p. 147, probably #1/36, 2 and 9. The deed from Bowen to Clarke is in Deed Book B-3, p. 306.) The 1855 tax list has a notation that the ten lots came to Hughes by collateral inheritance.

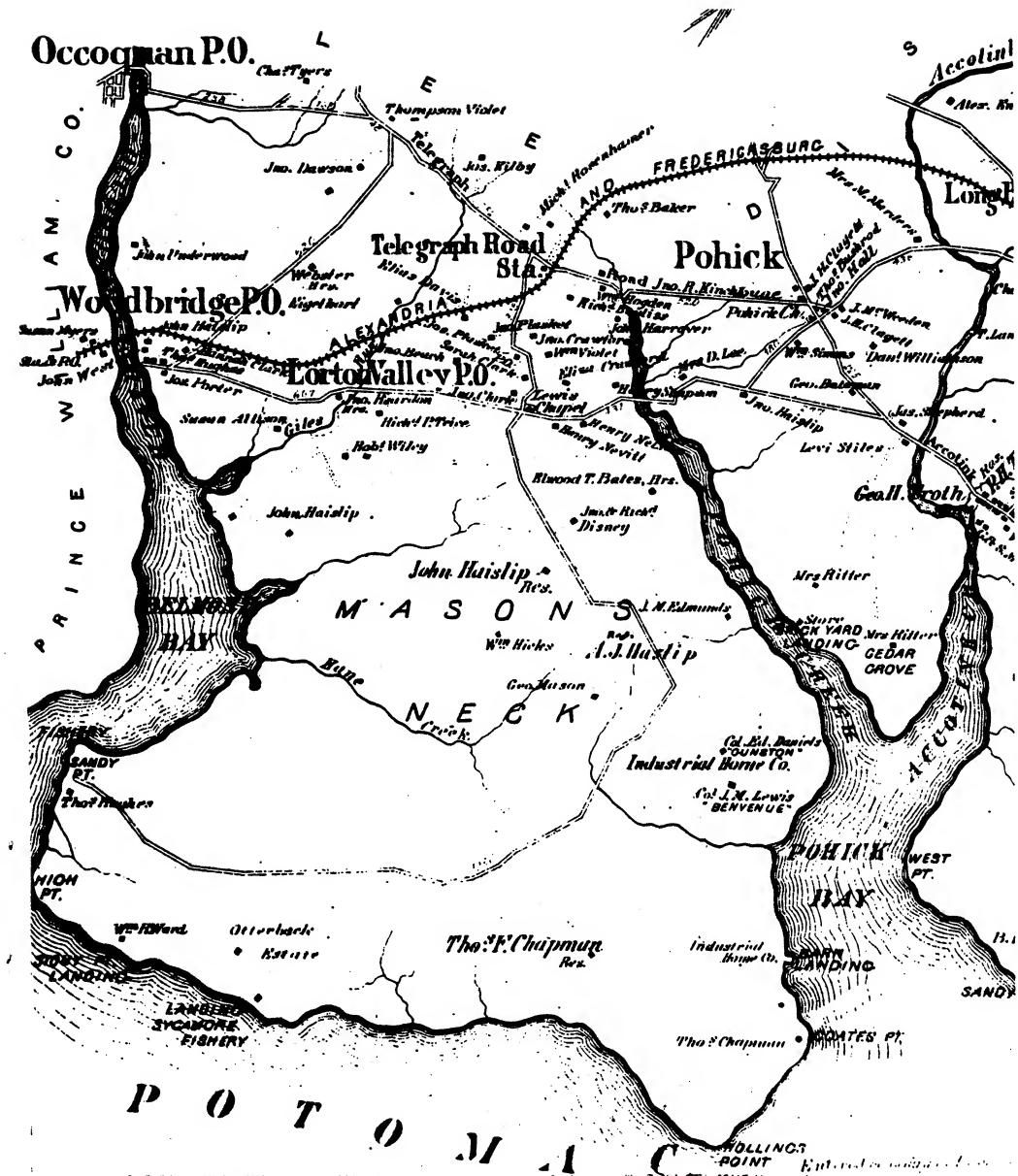


Figure 24. The Colchester neighborhood in 1879. Excerpt from G. M. Hopkins, *Atlas of Fifteen Miles Around Washington*.

34

These sales are shown in the tax lists but deeds have not been identified. It is possible that the lots which were retained by Hughes included the Duncan house (Fairfax Arms). The four lots kept through 1890 had buildings worth \$400.

35

In addition to the holdings of Potter, Weston and Hughes there were three lots (formerly owned by heirs of Ludwell Lee; these included #5 and 13) acquired by John S. Powell for payment of taxes in 1870. One lot was retained by the heirs of Edward Bates until 1884; this had belonged in the Wagener estate.

36

Dr. B. R. Heim, A Guide to the Potomac River, Chesapeake Bay and James River (Washington: by the author, 1881), p. 34.

37

Alexandria Gazette, July 7, 1874.

38

Ibid., July 1, 1874.

39

Ibid., September 5, 1873; March 4, 1879; February 8, 24, 1879.

40

Ibid., October 29, 30, 1873.

41

Ibid., June 11, 1892.

42

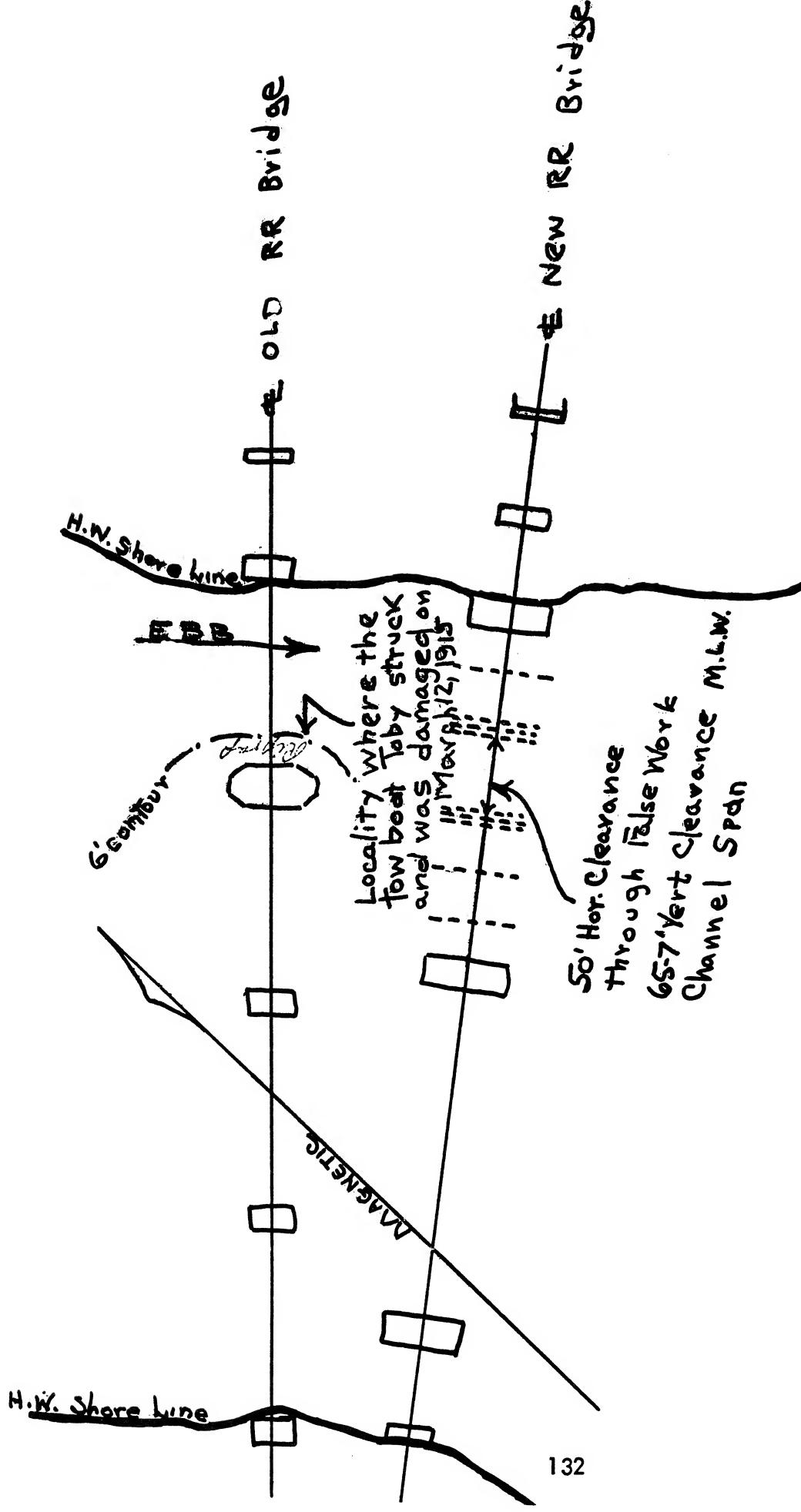
Ibid., August 6, 1898.

43

Ibid., December 10, 1894.

44

Ibid., August 9, 1897.



OCCOQUAN CREEK, VA
OLD & NEW R.R. BRIDGES
MARCH 16-1915

Scale 1" = 100'
100' 200' 300'

Figure 25. Courtesy of the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad Company.

Mar 18, 1915

Chapter VIII

THE PRESENT ENVIRONMENT

The Townscape

The town of Colchester is approximately 20 miles southwest of Washington, D.C., on the Occoquan River, which widens just below the town into Belmont and Occoquan Bay before merging with the Potomac. It is four miles above the mouth of the Occoquan and two miles downstream from the fall-line separating the piedmont from the coastal plain. The Occoquan forms the boundary between Fairfax and Prince William counties. It has a drainage area of nearly 600 square miles. The river descends in a relatively steep gradient of 500' within 50 miles.¹

Colchester is situated on the northeast shore of the Occoquan, on a gentle slope. The upper end of the town is about 70 feet above the river. Recent cutting down of the hillside to provide fill for the marina area has formed a steep bank about 10' high at the inland edge of the beach, but the slope was more gradual before the marina was developed.²

On the north side of Colchester Road the land has been cleared. There are, in addition to the two early houses, four dwellings built in the 1950's. On the south side, at the eastern edge of the original townsite, are two other recent houses. Midway between these and the shore is the late nineteenth century Beach house. At the marina there are two buildings. To the south of Colchester Road, within the original town, the area has grown up in brush except for the barren fill close to the shoreline. Beyond the brush are woods between the town and the subdivision of Harbor View along Massey Creek.

Some grading has been done between the Metzger house and the next house on the east. Two swimming pools have been installed on this side of the road, but with these exceptions the natural configuration of the terrain remains undisturbed below the level of the plow zone.

Twentieth Century Changes

The Washington & Southern, successor of the Alexandria & Fredericksburg Railway, decided by 1913 that the Occoquan bridge should be relocated slightly downstream and the roadbed realigned. Eight acres were purchased from John Weston's widow in a strip 1,520 feet long, abutting their right-of-way from the shoreline. Two acres between the Weston land and Ox Road were acquired from Hannah Potter Clarke.³ A plat showed the new bridge at 1,060 feet in length, two feet shorter than the existing span. War Department approval was necessary to ascertain that navigation would not be

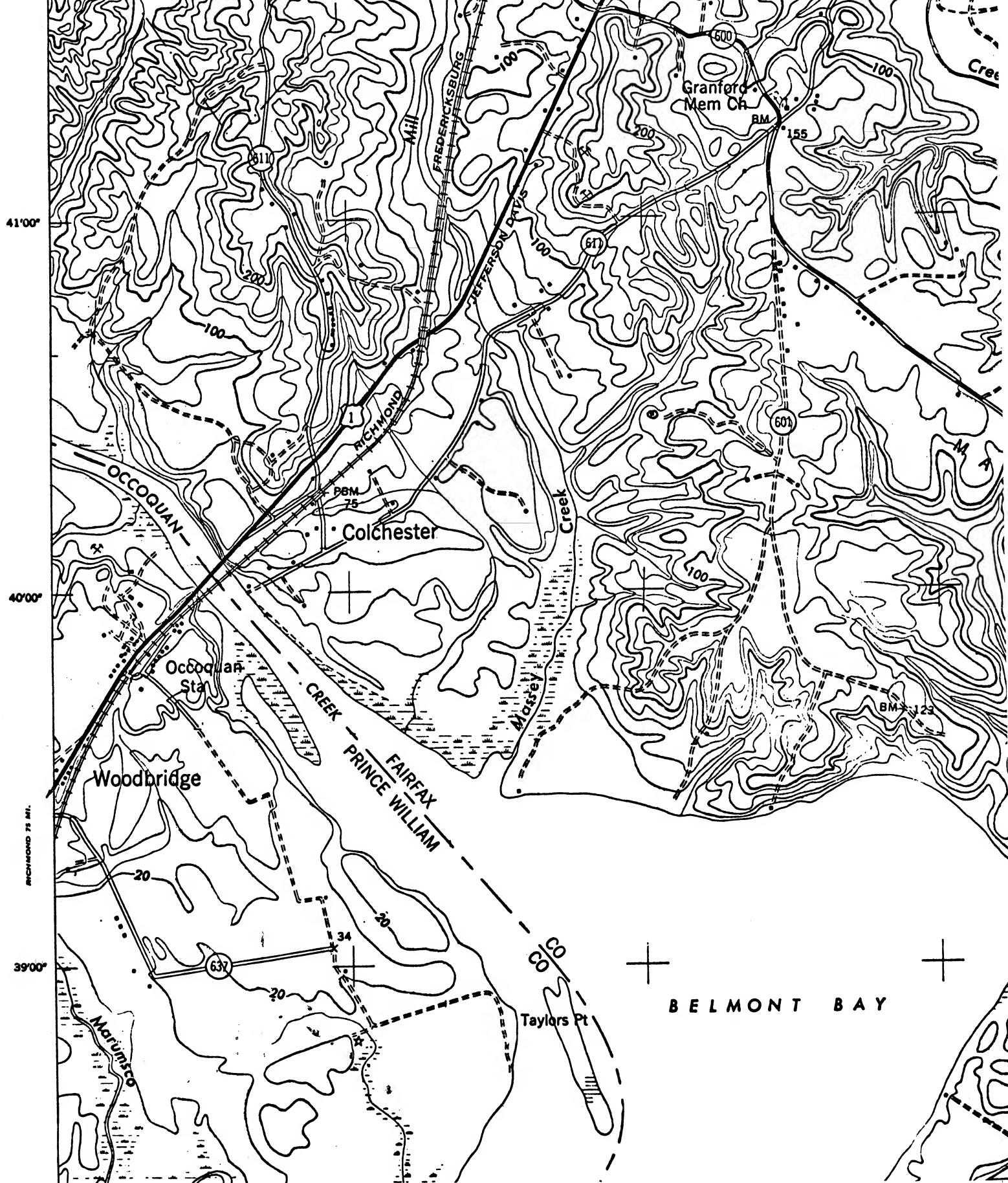


Figure 26. Portion of 1948 topographic map. United States Geological Survey.

adversely affected, and after a survey was made in August by the Corps of Engineers, permission was granted for construction in April 1914.

The new bridge, which is still in use, was built at a total cost of \$315,294.06. The only railroad bridge which crosses the Potomac River into Virginia above the Washington area is the one at Harpers Ferry, so the major share of north-south rail traffic on the East Coast of the United States travels over the Occoquan Bridge on the roadbed of the present Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac Railroad Company.

The old railroad bridge was reconditioned for highway travel, at a cost to the railroad of nearly \$5,000.⁴ After a certain amount of dispute between Prince William and Fairfax counties over jurisdictional arrangements had taken place, use of the structure was resumed as a highway facility. The railroad discontinued use of the old bridge on June 28, 1915.⁵ An inspection report made of the footings that spring after the towboat *Toby* struck the riprap gives a detailed sketch of the piers of both bridges.

A small marina established between 1930 and 1935 at Colchester by John Hicks is still in operation. Hicks was a relative of the wife of John S. Beach, who had settled in Colchester in the early 1880's. The heirs of John Beach own 11 acres along the shoreline south of Colchester Road, which includes approximately half of the original townsites. This land has not been developed and includes several potential archeological sites.

John Stonewall Beach married in 1881, when he was 22 years of age⁶ and was living in the town by 1883. He bought three parcels totaling $6\frac{1}{2}$ acres, formerly Potter's, Weston's and Hughes'.⁷ The driveway into the Beach house follows the alignment of the cross street (Wine Street) shown on the early town plat.⁸

Aside from the marina there were few changes in the neighborhood for several years. In 1947, a restaurant was opened on the north side of the highway (U.S. 1) and named the Colchester Inn, reviving the long tradition of hospitality begun in colonial times. It was established in a converted dwelling and had "dance hall privileges and tobacco selling privileges."⁹ This is the present Lazy Susan Inn, located on the land formerly owned by the Wagener family, and overlooking the grave of Peter Wagener in the meadow below.

In 1952, a subdivision was developed along the south side of Colchester Road by Hugh Williams, who owned the land which was formerly Potter's.¹⁰ This was known as Colchester. A dozen houses were built along the road but no large scale development ensued. The unsold back lots and a 122 acre tract on the south and east were sold three years later to McCue Properties, Inc.¹¹ A high-density townhouse and apartment complex was proposed on this tract in 1965; the required rezoning was denied by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors as a premature venture in this undeveloped area.¹²

Another proposal had been considered by Fairfax County for the Colchester area. A committee was chosen by the Board in 1964 to investigate the feasibility of establishing a major seaport on Belmont Bay. It was considered to be a logical spot because of the proximity of rail and highway transportation. After a year's study, the plan which was proposed, involving dredging of the Potomac channel and filling in the bay for use as a major heavy industrial center, did not meet with the approval of the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers and the scheme was dropped.¹³

Still another proposal was considered in 1967. At that time the Solite Corporation requested a change in zoning to set up a portable cement batching plant in the vicinity of the railroad tracks.¹⁴ This was opposed as being detrimental to the residential and recreational pattern of the area. Since that time the developmental trend has been oriented mostly toward residential and recreational use. Harbor View, on the north side of Massey Creek, was begun in the early 1960's.

Park Development

In the spring of 1965, plans were announced for a satellite city on an 1,821 acre tract on Mason Neck, to be known as King's Landing. A two year controversy ensued between developers and conservation groups, spearheaded by the Conservation Committee for Mason Neck, before this proposal was defeated. Local efforts, under the leadership of Elizabeth Hartwell, to preserve a wilderness area and bald eagle nesting ground led to the formation of a major park network on Mason Neck and along the Occoquan.¹⁵ In June 1967, the Nature Conservancy purchased 1,711 acres on the Neck to hold until local, regional, state and federal funds become available for acquisition. By 1970, some 3,000 acres had been reserved in this fashion.¹⁶

As a result, 5,000 acres of parkland have been set aside on Mason Neck. These include a 950 acre Federal Wildlife Refuge at the Great Marsh, a 1,000 acre Pohick Bay Regional Park and 1,100 acre Potomac Shoreline Regional Park. The State of Virginia has 556 acres at Gunston Hall and plans a 2,000 acre State Park in the Kane Creek area.¹⁷

In addition to the parkland here, the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority owns 4,693 acres on Bull Run and the Occoquan River in another regional park and plans to enlarge these holdings. Because of the increasing area of green space in the vicinity, Colchester's future seems to be less vulnerable to the prospect of industrial encroachment than it has been in recent years.

Chapter VIII Notes

1

H. R. 101, 73rd Cong., 1st Sess., (1933), pp. 7,33. "The Potomac River and its Tributaries Including Occoquan Creek."

2

Interview with Mary Beach, granddaughter of John S. Beach, September 1971.

3

Fairfax County Deed Book P-7, p. 514.

4

Letter File 1906-1915, Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac Railroad Company, Broad Street Station, Richmond, Virginia. Letters of April 30, 1914; December 31, 1915; January 5, 1916. The Railroad archives include manuscript deeds for properties along their right-of-way.

5

Letter from W. W. Young, Special Representative, RF&P RR., to author, February 4, 1971.

6

Fairfax County Register of Marriages, February 18, 1881.

7

Fairfax County Deed Book 1-5, p. 22, Harrison to Beach, three acres; G-5, p. 435, Potter to Beach, one acre; 0-5, p. 232, Smith to Beach, $2\frac{1}{2}$ acres. These were bought in 1883, 1888 and 1892.

8

Fairfax County Chancery File #112, Beach v. Hyde. This suit was filed in 1911 after Hyde, who had acquired the Potter farm and town land, ploughed through the street and denied Beach access to Colchester Road. Amanda Weston testified that she had used this as a street for the past 35 years, and that it had been and was still a public street in the old town of Colchester.

9

Fairfax County Deed Book 786, p. 453.

10

Fairfax County Deed Book 1025, p. 204. Potter's 148 acre Colchester Farm had been sold to John T. Downey in 1890 (Deed Book J-5, p. 362) and by him to A. T. Hyde in 1900 (Deed Book E-6, p. 228.) Hyde's widow left this acreage to her nephew Hugh Williams in 1936 (Will Book 16, p. 367).

11

Fairfax County Deed Book 1371, p. 328.

12

Fairfax Sun-Echo, January 21, 1965.

13

Alexandria Gazette, July 1, 1964; Evening Star, November 30, 1964;
Washington Post, June 17, 1965.

14

Interview with Robert Duncan, April 1971.

15

Fairfax Sun-Echo, June 15, 1961; Evening Star, June 6, 1966, December 21, 1966, July 30, 1967, June 14, 1970 ("Sunday" Magazine); Washington Post, November 11, 1965, April 21, 1966, December 20, 1966, April 9, 1967, July 2, 1967, October 26, 1967, April 4, 1969.

16

Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, Weekly Agenda, March 30, 1971.

17

Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority, Proposed Five Year Capital Improvement Program 1972-1976.



Figure 27. Fairfax Arms, c. 1923, south front. Addie Mae Beach Cox Collection.



Figure 28. Fairfax Arms, c. 1934, southeast corner. Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress.

Chapter IX

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTIONS

The Duncan House

This one and a half story white frame structure traditionally known as "Fairfax Arms," is built upon a high stone foundation, with exterior flanking stone chimneys. The upper sections of the two chimneys are freestanding and have been repaired with modern brick laid in American bond. The house has a gable roof with hipped dormers.

The building stands almost a full story above street level. A concrete porch replaces the high stoop shown in a 1934 photograph. This change was made by R. R. Gillingham. A small vestibule at the rear door of the house is also a twentieth century addition. Except for these additions, the only changes which have been made to the exterior of the dwelling are those of normal maintenance - replacement of broken windowpanes, worn shingles and fresh coats of paint.

The twin front entrances are original. This feature, usual in structures built as taverns, is found also at Mount Gilead in Centreville. Other Northern Virginia houses such as Dunbarton, near Dranesville, and the Ayre house on U. S. Route 50 at Chantilly, formerly had two front doors. A photograph of Rippon Lodge, in Prince William County, made prior to restoration in 1924,¹ reveals the same entrance pattern.

The first floor room layout has been described by T. Triplett Russell, A.I.A., as "an almost classic example of buildings built originally to serve as an inn, with separate doors leading to the ladies' parlor and the men's saloon-bar." (The lots upon which the Duncan house stands were advertised in 1767 as having a dwelling "suitable for an ordinary.")² Russell, a partner in the architectural firm of Russell-Melton Associates in Miami, Florida, has made an extensive study of Northern Virginia houses. In March 1971, he examined the Duncan residence.

The house is entered through the eastern of the two doors into the former ladies' parlor, now a dining room. From this small but well-proportioned room, measuring 13 feet, 5 inches by 13 feet 8 inches, a door on the west wall leads into the living room once used as a saloon-bar. Access to the upper story by an enclosed stairway is provided by a door on the north wall and another in the west wall of the rear room (the present kitchen). In this way female travelers could reach the stairs without having to pass through the gentlemen's section.

The present dining room has a fireplace in the northeast corner with a two foot, 11 inch opening and a simple wooden mantel six feet in length. Above the mantel the off-white plastered wall curves gently from the east exterior side of the house toward the rear interior wall. Built into this rear (north) wall on the side opposite the fireplace is a cupboard with butterfly shelves and a glass-paned door. "The door frame is

extremely light and may be original. The glass is old, although not quite the color one might expect of eighteenth century panes," according to Mr. Russell. This door was found in an outbuilding and put back in place by the present owners.

The hearth has been replaced by modern tiles. The fireplace which backs up to this one has no mantel and only a simple brick arch across the top. The latter is in the rear room, now used as a kitchen. This room measures 16 feet, 7 inches by 10 feet, 9 inches. There is an exterior door on the north wall and another on the west side of the room. The south wall contains the door into the dining room and ceiling-high cupboards. There is no molding in this room. New kitchen appliances were installed in 1971.

The men's saloon, on the west side of the house, is now used as a living room. Like the ladies' parlor, it has a corner fireplace with a simple carpenter classic mantel in the northwest corner of the room. Both fireplaces are on the exterior walls. The woodwork and mantels in both rooms appear to be original, and the chair rail and crown mold are intriguingly askew. In the living room the crown molding does not continue across the chimney breast, which may indicate that the upper part of the chimney had a different shape when first built. It is also possible, according to Mr. Russell, that this section of the molding has been removed or that the molding was added at some time after the house was built.

The outstanding feature of this room is the built-in cupboard on the rear (north) wall, reaching from floor to ceiling. It has five butterfly shelves. The top shelf is original, the others less delicately fashioned. The chair rail is continuous across the front of the cupboard at the level of the second shelf. There are indications that cupboard doors may once have been in place below the level of the chair rail, and that the upper section of the cupboard had open shelves accessible from the bar in the rear. The cupboard is now backed with three wide vertical boards, old but probably not there originally. The top shelf is the only one with bevelled edge. The cupboard framing is fluted. The shelves are 18 inches wide.

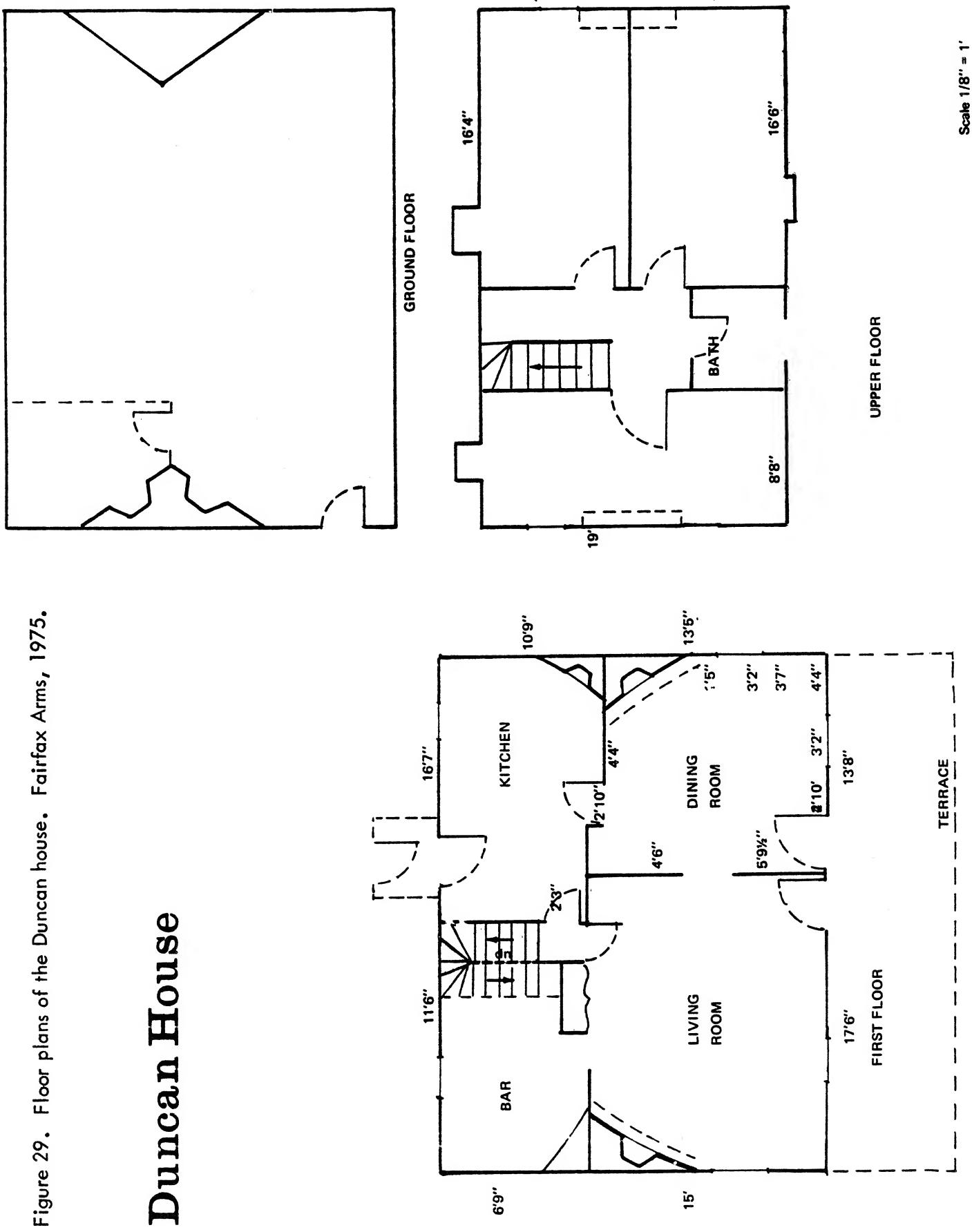
On either side of the cupboard is a doorway. The one on the right leads to the stairway, while the left doorway gives access to 9 by 11 foot barroom. There is no door between these two rooms, although a notch in the left door jamb at waist-level may have accommodated a wooden bar to prevent access by the public when the rear room was unattended. If this was the case, the right door jamb has been replaced. There is no corresponding notch on this side. The bar itself has been removed and the area on the east side of this small room (beneath the stairs) was probably once used for storage. This room has no ornamentation except for a bevelled base molding.

The wall in the southwest corner of the bar curves to accommodate the chimney breast, although there is no fireplace in this room at this time. The curvature of the wall corresponds with that in the living room.

There was a break in the chair rail adjacent to the west side of the fireplace in the living room. This strip, 12 inches in length, has been replaced by the present owners. They feel that this section may have been bare, with the space used for fireplace equipment or a woodpile. On this west wall the crown molding is of uneven depth, being about two inches shorter where it terminates at the chimney breast than at the front corner of the wall.

Duncan House

Figure 29. Floor plans of the Duncan house. Fairfax Arms, 1975.



An east door goes into the dining room. The exterior door on the south wall is not presently used. The living room measures 15 feet by 17 feet, 6 inches. Throughout the first floor the doorways are six feet high and the ceiling height is 10 feet.

The windows in the front rooms have nine over nine panes, some of which still have the old glass. Part of the window sash has been replaced but the rest is very old. According to Mr. Russell there is a small amount of old hardware but none which seems to be of the period when the house was built. The oak flooring on the first floor was installed by A. R. Roberts, who bought the house in 1941. At that time the old flooring was covered with linoleum.³ Since the present floor is about an inch higher than the hearths the original boards may still be in place underneath. On the first floor of the house the Duncans have removed many layers of wallpaper and left the plastered walls off-white, with the woodwork an antique gold.

The enclosed stairway, 2 feet, 7 inches wide, pivots and reverses direction half-way up to the second story. This floor now has three bedrooms and a hall bath but there were probably only two rooms originally. The bedroom across the west side of the house is 8 feet, 8 inches by 19 feet: the rest of the upper floor was very likely unpartitioned and used as a male sleeping quarters. The present owners were told that there had once been a fireplace in the center of the east exterior wall, which is now bisected by the partition between two bedrooms.

Original wide floor boards remain on the second story. There are four dormer windows: the ones on the north of the house have 19 inch deep windowseats but those on the south side are much more shallow (six inches deep). On the rear windows the panes are four over four and the sash may be original. The windows on the east and west walls have two over two panes.

The west bedroom shows indications of a former fireplace centered on the exterior wall. Flooring over the hearth area, 5 feet, 8 inches in length, is not the same as the rest of the boards. In 1971, the west wall was opened up and a small opening (about 18 inches by 24 inches) discovered about 30 inches above floor level. Mrs. Duncan stated that it was similar in appearance to a bedroom fireplace in Gadsby's Tavern in Alexandria, Virginia.

The east bedrooms have dimensions of 10 feet, 6 inches by 16 feet, 6 inches and 10 feet by 16 feet, 4 inches. Freestanding closets have been placed in the three bedrooms to avoid structural alterations.

The massive stone chimneys on the east and west ends of the house are said to have five flues, although in Mr. Russell's opinion the upper portions appear to be too slender for this to be the case. He feels that when the tops of the chimneys were rebuilt that narrow flues may have been included to accommodate stoves in the upper rooms. One observer who saw the house (then untenantanted) before 1927 remembers that only the lower portions of the chimneys were intact.⁴

In the stone basement, entered at ground level on the west, a portion of an arched brick fireplace remains. The modern furnace utilizes the flue of the adjacent basement fireplace, and the east wall shows traces of another previous fireplace. Before the house was adapted for modern living the basement was used as a kitchen (until 1927) and had a dirt floor.⁵

The framing of the first floor, as seen from the basement, is, in architect Russell's view, "a truly remarkable bit of colonial engineering in timber construction." There were originally no interior vertical supports other than the stone perimeter walls.⁶ About midway of the length of the house is an immense timber spanning front to rear. Two almost equally large crossbeams are mortised into the side of this beam. They are not supported by the exterior walls but are in turn mortised into immense relieving beams. The traverse beams are offset from each other to give greater support and are pegged as well as notched against shifting. The mortise is locked into place by wooden pegs with roughly carved heads. Floor joists are mortised into these timbers so that the bottoms of all framing members are at about the same level. "It is difficult to say why the original owner went to such lengths to preserve the clear span of the basement area," Mr. Russell commented, "but the result is extremely interesting."

The house has been owned by Mr. and Mrs. Robert Duncan, of Alexandria, since 1955 and used as their country residence. Both are deeply interested in Virginia history. Mr. Duncan has served as past president of the state society of the Sons of the American Revolution, his wife as President-General of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution. In addition, Mrs. Duncan has written a genealogy of the Moncure family and is a member of the Advisory Board of the Virginia Bicentennial Commission. They redecorated their house in 1971, installing a new kitchen and building an enclosed swimming pool to the east of the house behind the miniature boxwood garden. The other dwelling on their land was remodeled in May 1972, for use as a guest house.

Aside from the basic modernization done by R. R. Gillingham after his purchase in 1927 (bathroom, plumbing and heating), "The building has fortunately been little altered externally or internally and presents much the same appearance as it did in colonial days."⁷

The chain of title to the Duncan house, like that of most of the property in Colchester, is complex. A court decree in 1962 established the title of the present owners of the tier of lots on the north side of Colchester Road.⁸ Twentieth century ownership is clearly traced back from the Duncan's purchase in 1955. They bought the property from A. H. Roberts, who had owned the house since 1941. The previous owner, R. Roberts Gillingham, bought it in 1927 from A. T. Hyde.

Hyde was a surveyor who lived in Oil City, Pennsylvania. He had purchased land in Colchester in 1900. During his ownership Hyde appears to have used the house as a residence for his tenant farmer.⁹ For his own use he built a new house before 1920, utilizing gravestones from the town cemetery as steps on his front porch.¹⁰ Situated near the northwest corner of Colchester Road and Furnace Road, this dwelling burned in 1939.

His purchases in 1900 included three acres at this intersection bought from Weston¹¹ and another three acres from G. T. Hughes.¹² In addition to this Hyde bought the 148 acre Colchester Farm¹³ which had formerly belonged to the Potters.

The descriptions of the two three-acre tracts are not precise. Both were bounded by Colchester Road. The Weston parcel, according to the deed, was also bounded by Ox Road and land belonging to Hughes. This would appear to place the Hughes parcel west of the corner tract, therefore the Duncan house seems to be within the Hughes property. Both parcels are presently owned by Mr. Duncan. A check with his title attorneys, Davis & Ruffner, elicited the information that the only possible way to

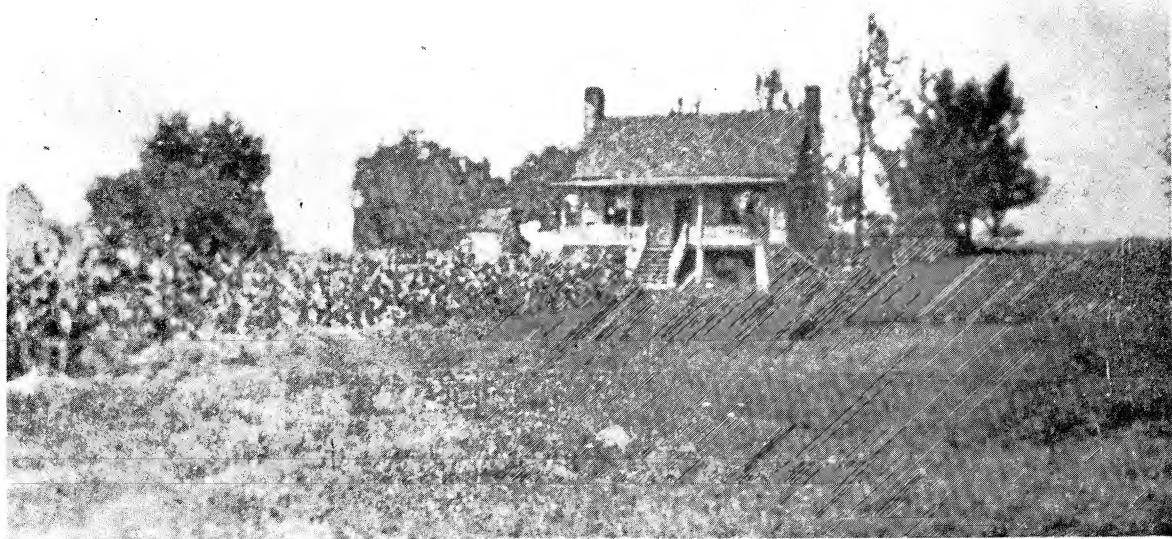


Figure 30. View of the Metzger house, c. 1923, south front. Addie Mae Beach Cox Collection.



Figure 31. View of Metzger house, 1970, west side.
Netherton photo.

determine which parcel included the present house would be the discovery of a building-location survey. These were rarely made in rural areas before 1960, according to Mr. Michael Horan of Davis & Ruffner, and then only in cases where a dispute had arisen. No such survey has been located.

On an 1879 map Hughes is shown as owning three buildings. In the absence of other evidence, it may be assumed that one of the three is the present Duncan house.

George Thomas Hughes had inherited considerable property in Colchester from his father,¹⁴ John Hughes. Only one deed is indexed for any of these town lots. This, made in 1851, refers only to "a certain lot on the north side of the main street." The lot included a well.¹⁵ During the nineteenth century town lots had ceased to be identified by their original plat numbers. To compound the confusion, the Wagener land north of the town line seems to have merged with the town land.¹⁶

As closely as can be determined, the Duncan house lot was acquired by Hughes from Thomas Beard. He, in turn, purchased it in 1833 from Daniel and Mary Wagener Lee.¹⁷ Mrs. Lee's father, the fourth Peter Wagener, had bought lot #21 for \$182 and #23 for \$36 in 1811, shortly before his death. When building valuations were added to the land tax list in 1817 the Wagener heirs had one improved lot, with buildings worth \$230. The lots bought in 1811 were part of the Thompson estate.¹⁸

The house is known to have been used as a tavern as late as 1800. Its previous ownership by Thompson, Henderson, Ross and Grayson has been discussed in earlier chapters concerning taverns and commercial activities in the town.¹⁹

The Metzger House

Until it was remodeled in 1924, this white frame one and a half story dwelling was similar in appearance to the Duncan house. Placed upon a high fieldstone foundation, it is built against the side of a gentle slope. The house is located halfway between the Duncan house and the Occoquan River.

Architectural historians Russell Jones and Worth Bailey, who saw the house in 1959 while compiling the Historic American Buildings Survey, said at that time a few wide and beaded shiplap boards remained on the exterior to indicate the original siding. The house has been considerably altered. The roof was raised seven feet, wide dormers replacing the former peaked ones. Two rooms were added at the rear of the house and a porch built on the west side in 1924 by the present owner, Elmer Metzger, who has lived there since 1913. In that year, he married Hattie Weston, whose family had lived in the house since 1831.

Like the Duncan house, this structure had flanking stone chimneys. The one at the east end of the house was torn down because the bricks on its upper portion were crumbling. It is shown on a photograph taken in 1920. The west chimney has a stone foundation; the upper portion is brick laid in Flemish bond. In architect T. Triplett Russell's opinion the lower part up to the first haunch certainly appears to be of eighteenth century construction.

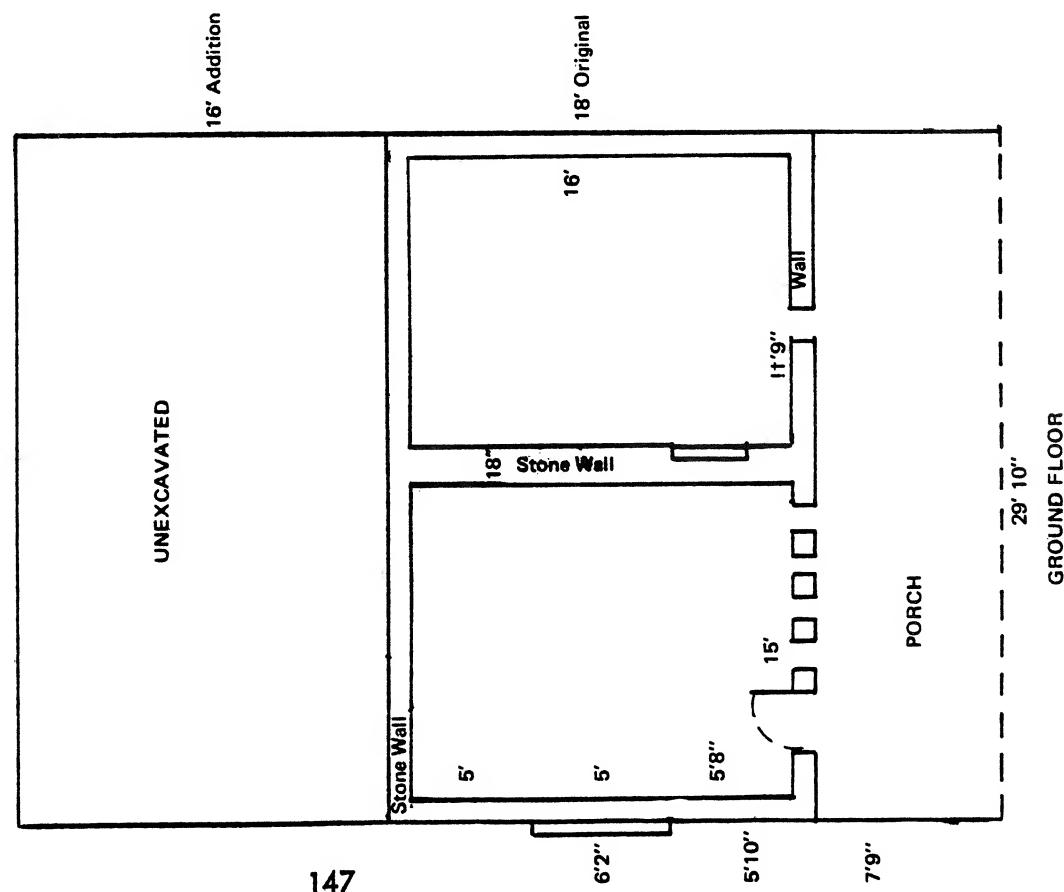
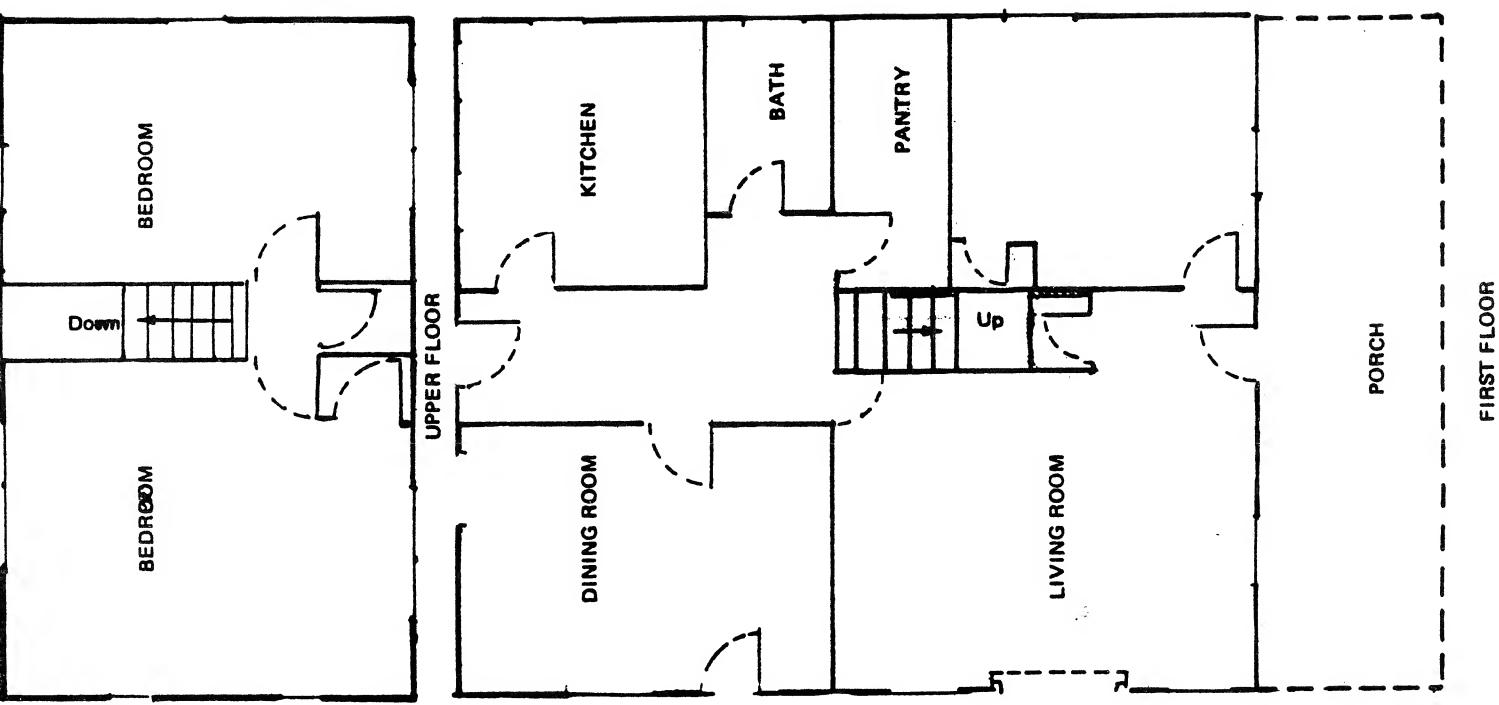
A wooden porch, measuring 8 by 30 feet, extends across the front of the house. This porch was put on shortly after 1913, replacing a smaller ten foot square porch.

Figure 32. Floor plans of Metzger house, 1975.

Metzger House

Scale 1/8" = 1'

Addition
Original House Ext.
Porch



The peaked roofline of the original 18 by 30 foot house can be readily seen on the east end of the structure. The addition on the rear of the house is 16 feet wide.

The house originally had a narrow center hall with an open staircase opposite the front door. The hall and east room had a paneled wainscot about 30 inches high, which was removed by Mr. Metzger. He explained that the room was too difficult to heat. The wainscot, along with a simple wooden²⁰ mantel in the west living room, was sold to a resident of Falls Church from whom he later attempted to recover them, but could not remember the man's name. A small portion of the wainscot is still in place in the former stairwell (which is now a closet) and in the cupboard of the room to the rear.

The first floor plan has been considerably altered. A modern partition divides the rooms on the east ~~end~~ of the house. The stairs, which ascended originally from the front hall, were moved first to the east wall of the present (west) living room. In 1924, when the back rooms were added, the stairway was moved again so that it ran straight up from a rear room.

The random width floors are probably original. Each piece is grooved on both sides, and separate tongue pieces join the boards.

The stone basement is entirely ~~above~~ grade on the south front, and was used as a kitchen until the twentieth century. The stone walls are 18 inches thick in the original section of the house. The west exterior wall has a fireplace with a five foot opening, which has been boarded up. Mr. John Metzger, son of the owner, said that within the fireplace the anchors of the iron frame which held the cooking equipment are still in place. This room measures 15 by 18 feet and has five small windows and a door on the south wall. Most of these were put in when the present front porch was put on shortly after 1913.

The east room has a dirt floor about six inches above the level of the brick floor in the former kitchen; the two rooms are separated by an 18 inch stone wall. The new part of the house has no basement.

The framing of the first floor, in Mr. Russell's opinion, is not nearly so remarkable as that in the Duncan house but is obviously old. Some hand made nails are visible but the mortise and tenon joints are not in evidence on a superficial inspection.

At the rear of the house stands an eight by ten foot outbuilding, said to have been a smokehouse. The interior shows no signs of its previous function. There have been many repairs made and the structure, now attached to the garage, was moved by Mr. Metzger. It was formerly located directly behind the house, where a walnut tree now grows.

Opinion is divided on the age of the Metzger house. Bailey and Jones attributed both this and the Duncan house to the second half of the eighteenth century on their 1959 HABS form. An article written in 1920²¹ reported John Weston as saying that the house had been bought by his father in 1850 and rebuilt. It is possible that the stone basement is the only original part of the house. Mr. Russell feels that the existing structure may incorporate parts of the first house.

The building stands on town lot #15, when the 1754 town plat is superimposed on recent aerial photographs. This town lot was bought from the trustees of Colchester in 1758 by merchant Alexander Henderson, who erected a 16 by 25 foot building in 1759 before selling the lot to Hector Ross in 1761. Henderson's building may have

been the structure which stood in the front yard of the Metzger house; the foundations of this building were exposed until the beginning of the twentieth century.²² Family tradition states that this building was Henderson's store.

Until 1831, when lot #15 was purchased by Lewis Weston, there is a gap in its ownership. The lot number is given in this deed and it was stated that it had been left to its former owner by his deceased wife Ann Muir, who had previously been Ann Downman.²³ The names provide two possible clues to the intervening history of the lot. In 1805, a William Downman advertised a lot in Colchester containing a dwelling with a kitchen underneath, a well enclosed garden with a spring, and a meathouse adjacent with a stable.²⁴ No lot number was given.

No deed has been located in which Ross sold the lot. There is, however, a deed indexed from Ross to his Scots employers in 1770-1771 and a deed in 1806 from the attorney of that firm to Ann Muir.²⁵ Both deedbooks are missing, so this sequence can only remain conjectural. There are no surviving wills for Mrs. Muir or her husband.²⁶ Lot #15 was sold by Muir's executor for \$100; the other Muir lot (#6/42) brought only \$12.50. This would indicate that there were buildings on #15 in 1831 at the time of the sale to Weston. In 1832, the first year in which he paid the land tax, the buildings were valued at \$250. Weston acquired, in some fashion,²⁷ another lot by 1835 and the valuation was increased to \$490; from 1855 to 1870 the valuation was \$470. No tax was paid by the Muirs previous to 1831.

With Lewis Weston's purchase in that year, the title descended in a direct line to his heirs. The late Mrs. Metzger was a foster daughter of John Weston, the son of Lewis Weston.



Figure 33. Colchester Marina. Addie Mae Beach Cox Collection.



Figure 34. Hyde house, c. 1923, Addie Mae Beach Cox Collection.

Chapter IX Notes

1

Potomac News (Dumfries, Virginia), October 8, 1971.

2

Maryland Gazette, July 9, 1767.

3

Interview with Mrs. Hugh Lynn, Occoquan, Virginia, in May 1971. Mrs. Lynn, daughter of A. H. Roberts, said that her father had made no other changes in the house.

4

Interview with Mrs. John Enochs, owner of Mount Air, Lorton, Virginia, in July 1971. She has lived there since 1914 and recalls seeing the Duncan house and its butterfly shelves.

5

Interview with Mrs. Peg Williams of Occoquan, daughter of A. H. Roberts. June 1971.

6

Interview with T. Triplett Russell, A.I.A., March 1971. A steel I-beam was installed to support the basement timbers after the house was purchased in 1927 by R. R. Gillingham, according to Mrs. Lynn.

7

Russell interview.

8

Fairfax County Chancery Records, File #15098, Williams v. Seidell.

9

Interview with Mrs. Mary Beach, Arlington, Virginia, October 1971. She recalls that the tenant farmer was one of the Violet family.

10

Evening Star, August 1, 1920. Mr. Arthur Beach, of Colchester, told the author of the tombstones. The Hyde residence, according to Mr. Elmer Metzger, may have been built on an old foundation.

11

Fairfax County Deed Book E-6, p. 229. The tract had been acquired from Potter in 1887 (see G-5, p. 140).

12

Fairfax County Deed Book E-6, p. 361.

13

Ibid., p. 228.

14

Fairfax County Deed Book F-5, p. 302, states that George Thomas Hughes was John Hughes' only heir. Hughes' other lots are described in Chapter VII, note 33.

15

Fairfax County Deed Book U-3, p. 468. The well is still usable, but a change in county regulations made it necessary to sink a new well. Mr. Summers, of the Fairfax County Health Department's Eastern Branch, stated that the brick-lined well at the Duncan house bore a close resemblance to wells at Mount Air and Belmont, two other landmarks in the southern part of Fairfax County. In an interview on December 1, 1971, he commented upon the careful craftsmanship found in these ancient wells.

16

Fairfax County Chancery Records, File #15098, Williams v. Seidell. Deposition of title examiner Courtland Davis, of Davis & Ruffner. The 17 acres north of the town line had been sold by the Lees to Haislip, then to Weston.

17

Fairfax County Deed Book B-3, p. 11.

18

Ibid., L-2, p. 5

19

See Chapter III.

20

The present mantel is brick.

21

Evening Star, August 1, 1920.

22

The late Mrs. Metzger remembered these foundations. She said there was a spring in the cellar.

23

Fairfax County Deed Book Z-2, p. 284.

24

Alexandria Daily Advertiser, January 26, 1805.

25

Fairfax County Deed Book J-1, p. 398 and F-2, p. 228.

26

Francis Muir, of Dinwiddie County, Virginia, died about 1830. The county will books predating 1831 have been destroyed.

27

There are no deeds for this or five other lots which he got between 1845 and 1855. Land tax lists within these dates have not been studied.

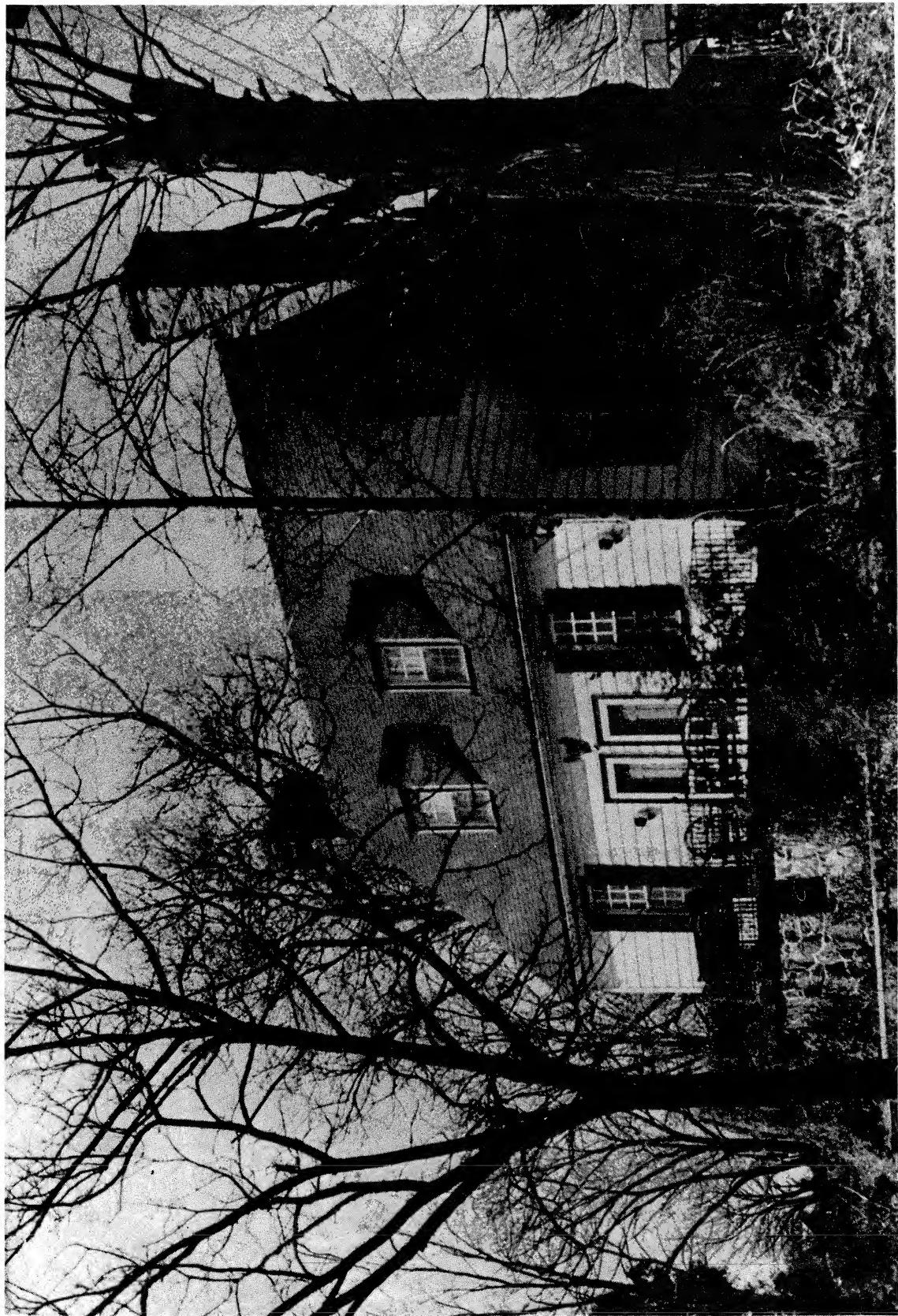


Figure 35. Fairfax Arms, 1959. Russell Jones photo. Library of Congress.

Chapter X

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

Photoarchaeological Evidence

In order to determine what traces of the colonial town might remain beneath the surface of the ground, the Fairfax County History Commission retained J. Glenn Little, Director of Contract Archaeology, Inc., and requested that he have infrared aerial photographs made of the town site of Colchester.

The flight was made in April 1970, by Air Photographics, Inc., Silver Spring, Maryland. The flight was timed for that part of the spring growing period when the ground foliage is most sensitive to the reflectivity of infrared wave lengths. As Mr. Little explained in his interpretive report,

When the earth is disturbed through the building of a foundation or by the plowing of a field, the organic matter in the turned soil increases at a faster or slower speed. If more moisture and nutrients enter the soil, possibly because it is loose or because moisture-holding bricks, stones and wood lie below, the organic growth rate increases. This moisture now feeds the surface grasses and plants, adding to the reflectivity of the brightness of their chlorophyll ... if the disturbed soil is packed and hard ... moisture cannot reach the particles. Then the surface cover reflects less and the film records duller, less intense shades.¹

When this infrared image is converted into color on transparent film the resulting gradations in hue can indicate to the trained eye the outline of underground foundation holes, trashpits or wells. Traces of previous roads and former shorelines may sometimes be ascertained.

This technique is limited by the flight conditions involved, by misleading soil disturbances due to natural causes and by technical factors. Infrared photography cannot reveal disturbances deeper than a few feet below ground surface, nor can it discriminate between a barn which burned in 1930 and a dwelling destroyed a century before. Within these limitations, however, infrared aerial photography is a useful tool for the archaeologist.

When properly interpreted, the locations of such potential underground structures can be pinpointed. Rectangular outlines delineated on the surface of the ground may indicate the presence of the remains of a man-made structure below. With the aid of the photographs, the extent of a subsequent field survey can be determined and prospective archaeological sites given a preliminary evaluation.

Mr. Little spent approximately 20 hours on the interpretation of the three nine by nine inch aerials, which are at an approximately scale of 1 inch = 220 feet. Viewed under magnification, they revealed 21 potential archaeological sites in Colchester which can be termed high priority sites. Two additional potential sites were found on the opposite shore of the Occoquan, one of which corresponds with the traditional location of the Mason ferry house. Ten of the 21 potential archaeological sites are classified by Mr. Little as "primary" in view of their clarity of outline compared to the colors of the surrounding soil.

In addition to the individual sites, four roads were defined which are no longer evident on the surface of the ground. These roads do not seem to have any connection with the town streets as laid out on the 1754 plat. One runs parallel to and just south of the RF&P railroad tracks, another runs in an arc northwest from potential site #23 and then turns southward to terminate in the driveway west of the Duncan house. A third road, parallel to the present Colchester Road (the historical Essex Street), does not seem to be at the requisite distance in a southerly direction which would enable it to correspond with the alignment of the other east-west street (Fairfax) on the town plat. A path was identified as extending southward perpendicular to Colchester Road, but in Mr. Little's opinion, "it does not have the indications of being a road with the same characteristics of the conjectured Fairfax Street."

Having plotted these features on an overlay, then superimposing the 1754 town plat upon the overlaid infrared photographs, the next step would be to examine the correlation between the two. Do a significant number of sites fall within individual lot boundaries? Are the two existing houses which remain from the early town positioned in accord with the historical record? The archaeologist concluded that "a degree of correlation has been achieved between the sites mapped historically from the records and sites mapped from photoarchaeological interpretation ... the percentage is high enough to justify continuation of research."²

Given this confirmation, a field survey was begun. The first objective was to determine which sites on the photographs represented structures known to be of twentieth century construction. Conversations with Mr. Metzger and Mr. Arthur Beach, both Colchester residents for over 50 years, seem to confirm the fact that some potential sites are recent. Site #3, north of the town, was identified as a late nineteenth century house site; #4, west of the Metzger house, as a twentieth century barn. Site #23 represents the twentieth century Hyde residence (burned 1939)³ and #21 is probably his barn.

Curiously enough, sites #9-14, on waterfront which has been disturbed by fill and grading, do not seem to be of recent origin. Neither man can recall any structures standing at these locations within their memory. This indicates that test excavations should be made at these spots, as well as at the remaining pretwentieth century locations. This procedure would occur after a preliminary field search of the surface to find out what type of artifacts can be seen on the ground. Following this examination, limited excavation in the form of test pits should be carried out at each site to ascertain the time period in which manmade objects fall. Sites then considered to be of eighteenth century origin might then be excavated more fully.

Mr. Little's study of the photographic evidence has confirmed, in his opinion, that the dimensions of the sites correspond generally with measurements of eighteenth and nineteenth century domestic structures.

He proposed that a field survey should be carried out to see whether the streets identified on the photographs exist physically. This should be done before individual site examination as a check upon the theoretical layout of the town. Limited testing for the location of Fairfax Street and for the assumed line of the intersecting north-south street (Wine Street) shown on the town plat was conducted on October 19, 1971. Through the cooperation of the Fairfax County Park Authority a backhoe and two operators were provided. Mr. George Shake and Mr. Richard Aldridge, of the Park Authority staff, joined Mr. Little in Colchester. Mrs. Mary Beach, owner of the property involved, was present, along with the author.

The historical record showed that the driveway into the Beach residence was the approximate location of Wine Street.⁴ A 35-foot trench, 25 inches wide and 30 inches deep, was opened on the west side of the driveway. The trench began six feet, five inches north of the telephone pole. Its profile showed ten inches of topsoil over a subsoil of yellow clay. A 20-foot cross trench was then excavated. This intersected the first trench and also cut across the present driveway. Along the north wall of this trench, some four feet west of the driveway, was evidence of a previous alignment of the road. Testimony given in a lawsuit in 1911⁵ stated that the location of this road (Wine Street) had been changed from time to time.

This former alignment was ascertained by a pebbly layer speckled with brick dust. The topsoil in the wall of the cross trench was more compact than that of the lateral trench, within the area of the former road. A thin layer of red clay had percolated down through the brown topsoil, indicating that dirt had at one time been brought in to level off the surface. This might have been done in 1911 when ploughing took place over the area, cutting off access to Colchester Road and thus precipitating the lawsuit. The red clay traces were not found in the lateral trench.

Another pair of trenches were excavated in the brush area north of the Beach house approximately 38 feet west of the present driveway. These were placed in an attempt to locate a foundation recalled by Mrs. Beach's mother. The east-west trench revealed no trace of such a foundation. Occasional half-bricks (a few with one end glazed), oyster shells and a few pieces of late nineteenth century ceramics were found here. At its western end a triangular piece of rusted iron, $12\frac{1}{2}$ inches at the base and $9\frac{1}{2}$ inches on the sides, was found in topsoil seven inches below the surface.

The second set of trenches provided further information concerning soil conditions. They differed from the first set having a layer of gravel at a depth of 24 inches. The clay subsoil was more moist in the second cross trench than had been the case in the intersecting east-west lateral trench, and both showed a heavier concentration of naturally-occurring slate fragments than in the first set of trenches.

Another feature uncovered in the wall of the north-south cross trench was a cluster of six fieldstones, ranging from 18 to 24 inches in length. These rested on the gravel layer about two feet below the surface. The stones were located ten feet north of the lateral trench and 82 feet west of the telephone pole. Associated with them and about six inches above was an isolated group of artifacts, consisting of one cut nail, two brick



A PLAN OF....
COLECHESTER TOWN

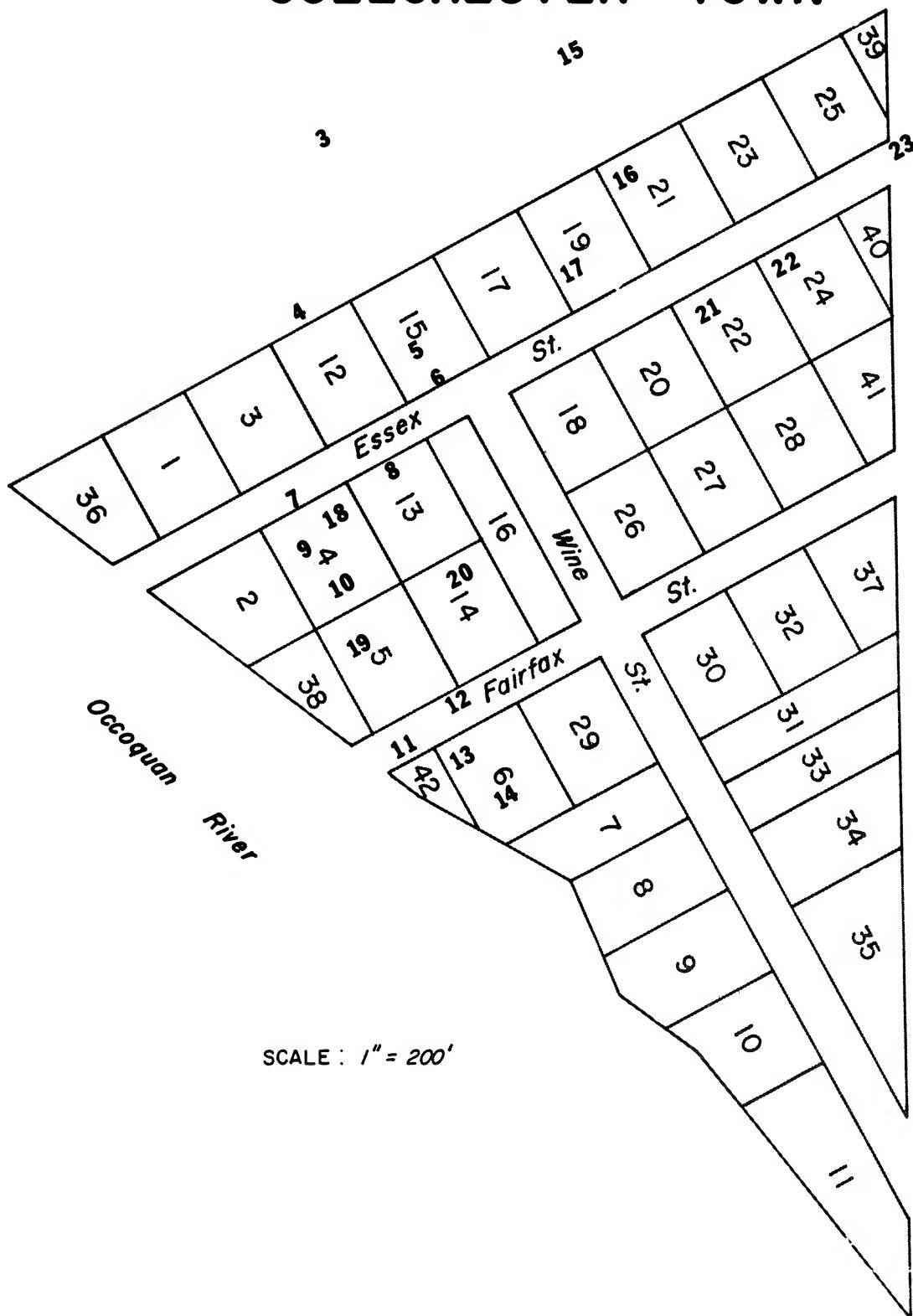


Figure 36. "A Plan of Colchester Town," surveyed by George West in 1754, showing numbered archeological sites referred to in text. Prepared by the Division of Mapping for the Office of Comprehensive Planning, Fairfax County, Virginia.

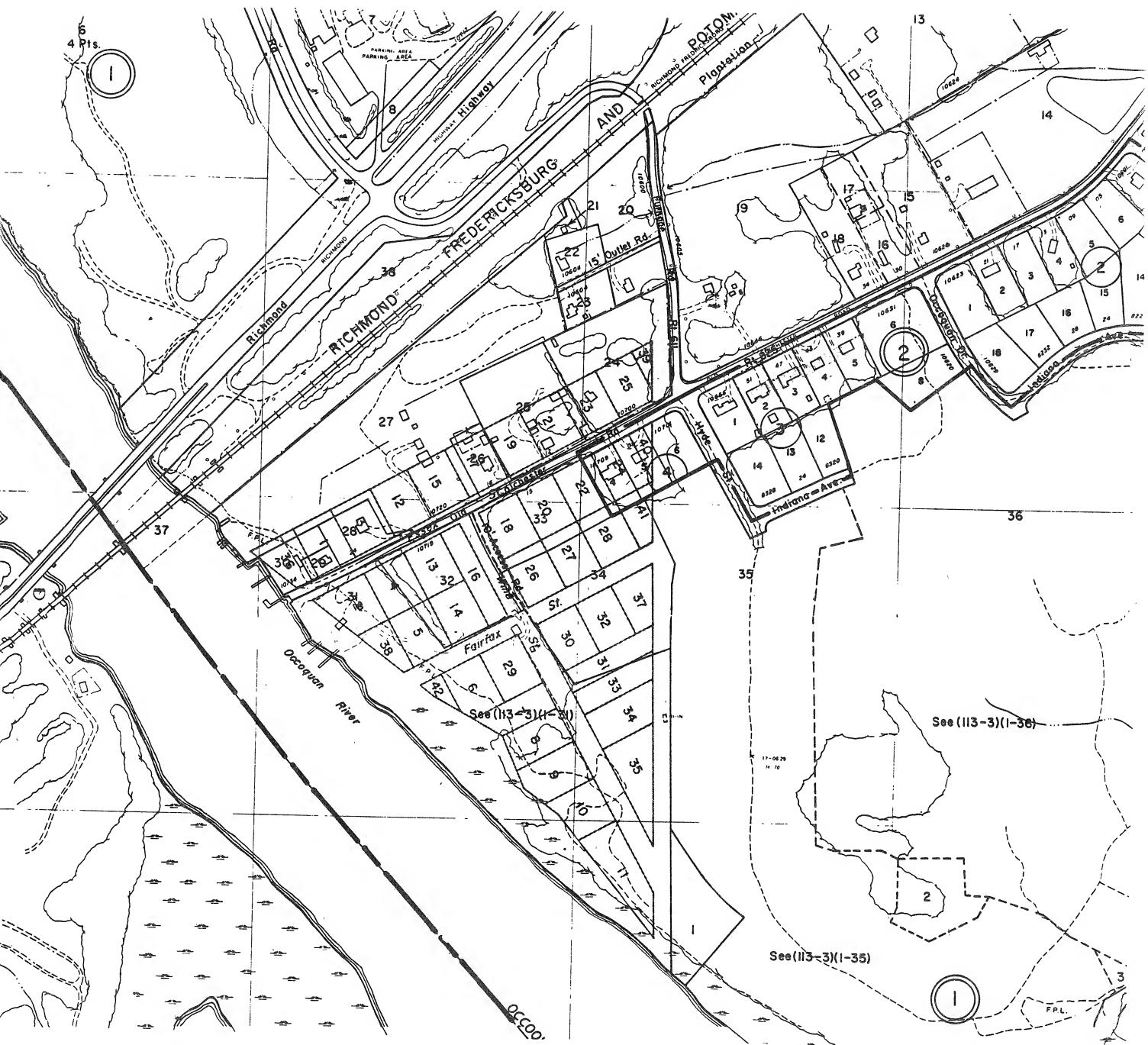


Figure 37. The old plan of Colchester shown in relation to modern landmarks in the locality. Prepared by the Division of Mapping for the Office of Comprehensive Planning, Fairfax County, Virginia.

fragments, one shard of green feather-edge Wedgewood and three fragments of amber bottle glass.

Such limited test trenching was unproductive as far as discovering a house foundation but it served to give a general picture of the soil profile. The scattered brick fragments and occasional artifacts are an indication, at least, that the area is not barren. Additional testing was conducted in June 1972, at the site of the Hyde house.

Potential Sites and Historical Evidence

When the 1754 town plat is superimposed on the marked aerial photographs, it is possible to add evidence taken from documentary sources. This provides another dimension to the picture of the early town. The comparison between town lots, historic data concerning structures built upon them, and indications of subsurface disturbances must be viewed as conjectural until actual excavation has determined the exact nature of the town's archaeological sites.

In keeping with the basic tenents of sound archaeological techniques, one must dig in the records before digging in the ground. The present study attempts to provide such documentary excavation.

Documentary Evidence of Colchester Structures

<u>Town Lot</u>	<u>Archaeological Site</u>	<u>Details</u>	<u>Date</u>
1/36		Colchester Tavern ⁶	c. 1757
3		Storehouse, stable, lot fenced; 2 foundations said to be under driveway (Metzger information)	by 1767
2/4	#7,9,10,18	Bayly had tavern license	1758
5	#19	Moore residence	by 1782
7		Warehouse lot	by 1764
8		Warehouse lot	1772
12		Gibson residence for rent	1784
13	#8	Log house; gone by 1817	by 1772
14	#20	Henderson store, stable; ad in 1811 "good dwelling needs repairs;" gone by 1817	by 1767

<u>Town Lot</u>	<u>Archaeological Site</u>	<u>Details</u>	<u>Date</u>
15	#5,6	16'x25' fenced building, possible kitchen, smokehouse; buildings worth \$250 in 1832	1759
18/26		Required improvements made on one, vineyard on other	by 1760
19	#17	Grayson rents storehouse, agrees to finish counting room, build stable, and finish cellar of store. ⁷	by 1762
20		McIntosh, owner, living in Colchester	by 1759
19/21/23	#16	Dwelling suitable for tavern; ad for dwelling, kitchen with room at one end (lathed and plastered with plank floor), stable, meathouse.	by 1767 1784
22	#21	Buildings worth \$130	1817
23		"Linton's Enclosure" ⁸	pre-1772
24	#22	Storehouse	1780
27		"Where Gardenshire had lived;" tan-yard later; no buildings by 1817	1775
29		Warehouse lot	by 1764
38		Landing house with cellar (or on #5)	1760
40		Possible store; buildings worth \$175 in 1817 (or on #24); house standing 1836	c. 1772
42/6	#11,12,13,14	Landing house (on #6)	1762

Mr. Little has made the following comments upon the potential archaeological sites which fall within the original town limits. He has classified these as primary (p) and secondary (s); the measurements were calibrated from the infrared photographs.

"Interpretation of the aerials was accomplished by viewing them singly on a light table through a Nikon Binocular Scope with continual magnification from 1.2x through 60x."⁹

Additional light was provided by two 3,200 k Transformer-controlled spots, with angle and light control, and with 80 B filters.

<u>Archaeological Site</u>	<u>Dimensions</u>	<u>Comments</u>
#4 s	30' x 15'	Rectangular shape, outlined by medium intensity of red.
#5 p	30' x 22'	Rectangular, very intense red reflection outlined by faint light red.
#6 p	15' x 15' 15' x 15'	May be one 35' x 15' rather than two single sites.
#7 p	35' x 18'	Intense green color, outlined by light red. The intense green suggests that a cellar hole or the collapse of a brick or stone building has slowed the growth rate of vegetation.
		Remnant of foundation visible at road cut at this site when seen on field inspection.
#8 p	35' x 30'	Rectangular, medium red outlined by medium green color.
#9 s #10 s	25' x 21' 40' x 30'	Both #9 and 10 occur on land which has been bulldozed, and thus are probably not relevant to the historic town.
#11 s #12 s #13 s #14 s	35' x 20' 45' x 30' 50' x 20' 30' x 20'	Sites #11-14 are also on land which seems to have been recently graded. Because of their abnormal length, however, #12 and 13 may be the remains of tobacco barns or warehouses.
#15 s	30' x 28'	Rectangular, medium gray-green.
#16 p	38' x 22'	Rectangular, medium bright red, gray-red outline.
#17 p	48' x 30'	Dull red color, gray-red outline.
#18 p	40' x 30'	Outlined by a red-green line.

<u>Archaeological Site</u>	<u>Dimensions</u>	<u>Comments</u>
#19 s	25' x 20'	Disturbed by mechanical grading of area.
#20 p	35' x 30'	Outlined by a medium to dark green line.
#21 p	50' x 35'	Outlined by a bright red line.
#22 s	Disturbance	These sites may or may not represent
#23 s	Disturbance	cultural activities.

All of the potential sites measured less than 50 feet by 50 feet, falling within the average range of domestic structure dimensions for this time period. Six of the primary sites have fairly uniform dimensions, running to 30 feet or more in length. The Metzger house, before additions were built, was 30 feet by 18 feet, while the Duncan house is slightly larger (32 by 24 feet).

The four larger sites, ranging from 40 to 50 feet in length, could perhaps represent stables or storehouses. Measurements made from the photographs do not necessarily reflect accurately the true size of the building. This could be determined only by archaeological methods.

It should also be stated that the presence of sites smaller than 20 feet by 20 feet, while not detectable on the surface photographs, may be assumed. The one inch to 220 foot scale of the aerials is too small to identify outbuilding remains from the altitude at which the pictures were taken. Such small dependencies as dairies, meat houses, or kitchens may not have disturbed the soil sufficiently to be distinguished from the air.¹⁰

There is one other site, located in the forested area east of the town, which has been identified by Michael Ritzer. This young Colchester resident first contacted the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission and identified known building foundations to their archaeologist, Edward F. Heite. Within the limits of the former cemetery, Heite found brick fragments on the surface and indications of a foundation underground. Because of the tree cover this location would not have been evident from the air. The possibility that the first church, identified only as being "above the ferry" may have been situated here by 1730 makes this an important site for study.

On the basis of the preliminary steps which have been taken, it is hoped that certain further archaeological work can be undertaken in the future. Colchester represents an untapped resource which, if it is protected from uncontrolled contemporary building activities, may add a wealth of additional knowledge to our understanding of town life of the eighteenth century.

As Ivor Noel Hume, Chief Archaeologist for Colonial Williamsburg, concluded on the closing page of Here Lies Virginia,

If we are to appreciate our own place in history, our past must be studied and preserved ... its fragments, buried in the ground, can tell something that the future needs to know¹¹

Chapter X Notes

1

J. Glenn Little, Aerial Photoarchaeological Interpretation Notes on Colchester, Virginia. Prepared for the Fairfax County History Commission, January 1971. Virginiana Collection, Fairfax County Central Library.

2

Ibid.

3

Interview with Mrs. Peg Williams, Occoquan, Virginia, who said the house burned in August 1939.

4

Fairfax County Chancery Records, File 112, Beach v. Hyde.

5

Ibid.

6

Advertised as being "at the ferry landing."

7

Fairfax County Deed Book E-1, p. 147.

8

Fairfax County Deed Book K-1, p. 190.

9

Little, Aerial Photo Notes, p. 6.

10

Ibid., p. 11.

11

Ivor Noel Hume, Here Lies Virginia: An Archaeologist's View of Colonial Life and History (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), p. 308.

Appendix A

TRUSTEES DEEDS TO COLCHESTER LOTS

#1	Peter Wagener	1788 (1771)	R-1, 288
#2	Peter Wagener	1788 (1771)	R-1, 288
#3	Benjamin Grayson	1756	D-1, 331
#4	William Bayly	1756	D-1, 333
#5	Edward Conner	1759	D-1, 572
#6	Benjamin Grayson	1756	D-1, 331
#7	(Benjamin Grayson)		F-1
#8	(warehouse, Hening 8:508)		K-1, 203 (referred to)
#9	Peter Wagener	1788 (1771)	R-1, 288
#10	Alexander Henderson	1775	M-1, 173
#11	Hector Ross	1775	M-1, 172
#12	Phillip Peill	1759	D-1, 574
#13	William Bayly	1756	D-1, 333
#14	Valentine Cloninger	1758	D-1, 635
#15	Alexander Henderson	1758	D-1, 550
#16	market		
#17	Peter Wagener	1788 (1771)	R-1, 288
#18	Morris Pound	1758	D-1, 633
#19	Benjamin Grayson	1756	D-1, 331
#20	John McIntosh	1758	D-1, 634
#21	Benjamin Grayson	1756	D-1, 331
#22	Edward Conner	1759	D-1, 572
#23	Benjamin Grayson	1756	D-1, 331
#24	Edward Conner	1759	D-1, 572
#25	George Carpenter	1758	D-1, 636
#26	Morris Pound	1758	D-1, 633
#27	George Carpenter	1758	D-1, 636
#28			
#29	(Benjamin Grayson)		F-1,
#30	Alexander Henderson	1775	M-1, 173
#31			
#32	Alexander Henderson	1775	M-1, 173
#33	Peter Wagener, Jr.	1775	M-1, 174
#34			
#35			
#36	Peter Wagener	1788 (1771)	R-1, 288
#37	(Benjamin Grayson) Regrant to Peter Wagener, Jr.	1775	F-1; M-1-174 (Ref. to E-1-156)

#38	Edward Conner	1759	D-1, 572
#39	George Carpenter	1758	D-1, 636
#40	Edward Conner	1759	D-1, 572
#41			
#42	Benjamin Grayson	1756	D-1, 331

Deeds from the trustees indexed for missing deedbook F-1:

F-1-17	William Bayliss	1763-1765
F-1-46	Benjamin Grayson	
F-1-271	Benjamin Grayson	
F-1-273	Benjamin Grayson	

Appendix B

INSPECTORS AT COLCHESTER WAREHOUSE

1782	Edward Washington Robert Boggess William Donaldson, asst.	J. C. May 13, 1782
1783	William Donaldson John Ragan Nathaniel Halley, asst.	O-1-7 O-1-6 J. C. Sept. 8, 1783
1784	William Donaldson	P-1-526
1785	Samuel Bayly John Ragan John Stone, additional insp.	Q-1-72 J. C. Oct. 12, 1785
1786	Samuel Bayly John Stone John Coffer, additional insp.	Q-1-99 J.C. Oct. 28, 1786
1787	Samuel Bayly John Stone	Q-1-478
1790	Angel Gordon, picker of tobo.	Ct. O. B. June 3, 1790
1792	John Stone Francis Stone	U-1-429 U-1-438
1794	Enoch Ward	X-1-370
1795	Enoch Ward Richard B. Meaks	Y-1-151 Y-1-154
1796	Enoch Ward	Z-1-126
1797	Richard B. Meaks Peter Coulter	Z-1-287 Z-1-540
1798	Peter Coulter	A-2-413

1799	Enoch Ward Peter Coulter	B-2-275
1800	Enoch Ward Peter Coulter	C-2-261
1801	Enoch Ward Peter Coulter	D-2-27
1802	Enoch Ward Peter Coulter	D-2-319
1803	Peter Coulter Joseph Hampton William Triplett	E-2-32 <u>Alex. D. Adv., Nov. 2, 1803</u>
1804	Peter Coulter Joseph Hampton	E-2-334 E-2-335
1805	Peter Coulter	F-2-412

NOTE: This list has been compiled from the Journals of the Council of the State of Virginia, Fairfax County Deedbooks and Court Order Books, and one item from the Alexandria Gazette. It is not complete, for sometimes the inspectors bonds were not indexed as such and some deedbooks are missing. No further bonds were found in extant indexed deedbooks of the second series.

Appendix C

DUNCAN HOUSE - CHAIN OF TITLE

1756	May 17. Trustees of Colchester to Benjamin Grayson. Lot #3, 6, 19, 21, 23, 42 on Essex and Fairfax Streets. £31.5.00.	D-1, 331
1762	May 10. Benjamin Grayson mortgage to David Loudon of Essex County. Lots #3, 19, 21, 23, for debt of £700.	E-1, 165
1772	September 9. David Loudon, mariner and merchant, to Hector Ross. Lots #3, 19, 21, 23 exclusive of the dower rights of Elizabeth Grayson, widow of Benjamin Grayson. £550.	K-1, 197
1773	August 17. Hector Ross to Alexander Henderson. Lots #3, 19, 21, 23 for £326.	L-1, 41
1779	August 27. Alexander Henderson to William Thompson, lots #21, 23, 38, 19. Missing deed-book. Reference in consecutive deed.	N-1, 228 or 231
1811	R. Ratcliffe, Commissioner for estate of William Thompson, deceased, to Peter Wagener. Lot #21 for \$182, lot #23 for \$36, lot 38 for \$46.	L-2, 5
1833	March 10. (conjectured section) Daniel and Mary Lee to Thomas Beard of Colchester. A lot "on the north side of the main street...146' on the street and running to the north line of town, with well." \$150. Mary Lee was the daughter of Peter Wagener, who died shortly after his purchase and left no will.	B-3, 11
1851	March 1. Thomas and Caroline Beard of Prince Georges County, Md., to John Raden and John Hughes. A certain lot on the north side of the main street with well. \$70.	U-3, 468

	John Hughes left only one son, George Thomas. Hughes left no will.	F-5,302
1900	April 25. G. T. Hughes to A. T. Hyde of Oil City, Penna. A tract bounded on the north by Hyde land formerly Westons, on the southeast by the Alexandria Pike, on the southwest and northwest by lands of John Weston, containing three acres. \$425.	M-6, 361
1927	June 29. A. T. Hyde and wife to Lida W. Gillingham et al. Same description.	A-10, 579
1941	January 1. Lida W. Gillingham et al. to A. H. Roberts and wife Florence. Same description.	O-14, 71
1953	December 18. Will of Florence Roberts, dated June 26, 1950, probated. (A.H. Roberts left no will.) Estate to five children.	Will Book 46, p. 300
1955	June 15. R. F. Roberts et al. to Marian Duncan. Mr. and Mrs. Robert Duncan are the present owners.	1327, 284

Appendix D

METZGER HOUSE - CHAIN OF TITLE

1758	September 16. Trustees of Colchester to Alexander Henderson. Lot 15, for £15.10.0.	D-1, 550
1761	July 19. Alexander Henderson, merchant, to Hector Ross, merchant. Lot 15, for £120 current money.	D-1, 882
(conjectured section)		
1770/ 1771	Hector Ross to Oswald & Denniston. Missing deedbook.	J-1, 398
1805/ 1806	John Laird, attorney for Oswald & Denniston, to Ann Muir. Missing deedbook.	F-2, 228
1831	May 10. Gustavus Muir, executor for Francis Muir, sells lots bequeathed to Francis Muir by his late wife Ann, formerly Ann Downman. Lot 15, for \$100 Virginia currency, to Lewis Weston.	Z-2, 284
1865	October. Division of the property of the late Lewis Weston among five children.	F-4, 259
1865- 1873	John Weston from brothers and sisters. All title to their one-fifth share in two houses and seven lots in Colchester.	M-4, 173 M-4, 242 O-4, 259 Q-4, 264
1901	February 20. John Weston's will, dated February 7, 1893, probated. Estate left to wife Amanda. Will Book.	H-2, p. 321
1924	Amanda Weston will. Estate left to daughter Hattie I. Metzger. Probated April 8, 1924.	Will Book 10, p. 316
1962	Hattie I. Metzger will. Estate to husband Elmer Metzger, the present owner. Dated April 20, 1960, probated November 1, 1962.	Will Book 80, p. 565

Appendix E

A COLCHESTER CENSUS

This information concerning residents and those who owned town lots has been obtained from such primary sources as Fairfax County Deedbooks, Will Books, and Chancery Cases (most of which have been indexed) in the Fairfax County, Virginia, court house. Other manuscript records at that place, such as the County Court Order Books, have no index. Material has been gathered from the Fairfax Land Tax Books (in the Virginia State Library in Richmond), from the printed Journal of the Council of the State of Virginia, and from contemporary newspapers.

The reader who seeks specific citations is urged to consult the author's working papers for this monograph, on file in the Virginiana Collection, Fairfax County Central Library, Fairfax, Virginia.

Those men who served as trustees of Colchester do not appear in this census, since they have been discussed in the text.

Allison, John W. Bought lot #24 and 40 in 1836 from Bedinger, but not on tax list of town. In 1839, with James Potter, he bought from Berry the lower half of Bourne's patent (376 acres). Died January 15, 1849, leaving his wife Susan and children (Martha and William).

Bailis, William In 1759, bought #24 from Conner, and an unidentified lot between 1763 and 1765. According to Glassford & Co. ledger (#188), Bailis was dead by 1766.

Barker, Leonard Owned #22 1805-1808, then sold to Thomas Parsons. Paid tax 1806-1810 on lot bought from Barrett and Williamson. Leonard Barker was the son of William Barker; Leonard's wife was Anna and their daughter was Celina.

Barrett, Thomas Second husband of Nancy, widow of Jesse Williamson. Her dower right was apparently #22. Barrett bought #24 and 40, which were treated as one 3/4 acre lot, from Collins between 1801 and 1803 and sold them in 1803 to Beddinger. He was living in Colchester at the time. Paid no tax on lot.

Bates, Edward Did not reside in Colchester but acquired rights to four lots through his wife Martha Wagener. The son of Thomas Bates of Lebanon, a tract on Mason Neck owned by the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority. Edward married before 1827 and lived on the part of the Stisted tract which had been inherited by his wife. Bates paid taxes on three Colchester lots 1826-1829; his family retained two of these lots until 1874. The "wharf lot," sold in 1829 to Clarke, may have been #38. Bates was active in the Methodist church, and lived for many years on the Lebanon estate.

Bayly, William At the first sale in May 1756, Bayly bought lots #4 and 13. Then a resident of Prince William County, he moved to Colchester by February 1758, when he obtained a license to operate a tavern in his house at that place. In 1759, he was an inspector of tobacco at the Occoquan warehouse.

The tavern license was held by his son Samuel in 1763; in 1768 his son Pierce took over.

About 1766, William Bayly bought the lower half of Bourne's patent from Waugh. By 1768, he was an inspector at the Colchester tobacco warehouse and in two years was its proprietor. William and Mary Bayly had seven sons and one daughter. Pierce, who had built a logged house on #13 before 1772, was the tax collector for Fairfax County 1767-1772, subsheriff in 1768 and sheriff in 1769. He moved to Loudoun County and was a justice of the court in 1777. Pierce died in May 1801. Ann, his sister, inherited from her father the lots in Colchester where his wife had lived and the warehouse lots #6 and 42, 7, 29. William died in 1782. His heir, Samuel, bought #20 between 1778-1783. He was an inspector of the warehouse in 1785 and 1787. For a time he was a partner in Bayly, Washington & Co. This was dissolved in August 1795. From 1804 to 1813 he was the postmaster at Colchester.

Samuel Bayly sold certain lots to George Leslie about 1802, recorded in missing deedbook D-2. He was taxed for five lots 1787-1795, for two in 1796-1798, for three 1799-1816. From 1817 to 1844, his heirs were taxed on four lots. Samuel's son George became insolvent in September 1825; these lots were sold by the sheriff to Henry Halley and eventually passed to Potter in 1852.

Bayly's half of the original Bourne patent was mortgaged in 1808, and sold in 1810 to Samuel Dean. In this sale he kept a 10½ acre strip which bordered the town and extended from Colchester Road to the Occoquan. Both parcels were later purchased by Potter, in 1839 and 1852.

Beach, Joel Not named on the tax list, but advertised in February 1790, for a tanner and shoemaker and signing his ad "Joel Beach, Colchester;" Beach also lived in Centreville.

Beach, John J. Married (by 1834) to Celina, daughter of Leonard Baker.

Beach, John S. The son of Rezin Beach, who lived on Ox Road, John Stonewall Beach was two years of age in the 1860 census. One of six children, he was the first of the family to live in Colchester. According to family tradition he lived there for some years before obtaining a deed for one acre on the waterside from Mrs. Potter in 1883. In 1888, he added three acres between his land and that of the Potters; another two and one-half acres were purchased in 1892, on the southeast side of Colchester Road and fronting on the Occoquan.

His first dwelling was destroyed by a severe storm. During the 1880's, he built another house, which is still standing and is owned by his heirs. The drive-way leading to this house passes through a 16 foot easement obtained through a lawsuit in 1912; its alignment is that of Wine Street in the colonial town. The

Beach family owns about 11 acres, nearly half of the town site. Their eastern boundary appears to be the same as the 1754 town plat. The line seems to be located along the dividing line of the 1729 partition of the original patent.

Beach, Joseph Along with his brother Cornelius, Joseph Beach was a son of Barbara Beach and James Potter. The brothers were known both as Beach and Potter. (See Potter.)

Beard, Thomas Listed as residing in Fairfax County in his 1829 deed to lot #19, but living in Colchester by 1833. He then bought two more lots, perhaps #21 and 23, from the Wagener heirs. Beard and his wife Caroline paid tax on one lot, with buildings valued at \$150, from 1830 to 1834. From 1835 to 1844 he owned three lots. The valuation for structures on his later purchase was \$230. By 1842, the valuation dropped to \$125 and \$75. In 1851, Beard, by then living in Prince Georges County, Maryland, sold "a certain lot" to John Hughes.

Bedinger, Andrew Lived in the town in 1803 when he bought #24 and 40 from Barrett. In 1811, he added #11, and also $2\frac{1}{2}$ acres adjacent to the town's north line (behind lots #19 to 39). In 1807, he was charged by the court with selling liquor without a license, but held a tavern license 1809-1814. Bedinger, and later his son George, paid taxes on one lot from 1804-1817. In that year a valuation was first added for buildings, and \$175 was listed as their value. From 1817 to 1839, taxes were paid on two lots.

The 1820 census for Colchester shows Elizabeth Bedinger as the head of the household, with two adult males and two adult females living with her. Her son George lived in Colchester in 1836. At that time he sold #24 and 40 to John Allison.

Belt, Walter S. Not on the tax list. Operated a store in the town in 1801, when he and Dr. Blake engaged in a lengthy feud through the medium of the Alexandria newspaper. Belt's character was so maligned that he closed his store and moved away.

Berry, Tholemiah Living in Alexandria in 1813 when he bought the 376 acre tract formerly owned by the Bayly family. In 1819, Berry paid taxes on five lots: #22 was apparently acquired from Parsons and had buildings worth \$130; two other lots bought from Parsons, and a fourth lot bought from Welles (with buildings valued at \$230). He had also a half-acre adjacent to the town (with \$130 added for buildings), bought from Hooe. From 1822 to 1828, tax was paid on three lots.

Tholemiah and Mary Berry, with three children under ten years of age and two under 16, were listed as Colchester residents in the 1820 census. Their household included three females between the ages of 16 and 26. Five of their eight slaves farmed the land. Both Berry and his wife died by November, 1825; their daughter Mary was named coexecutor of the estate. Funeral expenses for her parents totaled \$11.00.

Berry, Mary Bought two lots in town in 1820 from Maria Leslie, who had inherited them from Dr. Leslie. One three acre parcel was north of Colchester Road and bounded by Berry land. The other one acre adjoined the old warehouse lot south of that road, and included #30. Mary paid tax on both pieces from 1822 to 1844. By 1855, they were owned by James Potter.

Blake, Dr. James Rented the tavern from William Thompson's widow in 1801-1802. Quarreled with Walter Belt but refused to fight a duel. Blake was a member of the Virginia House of Delegates in 1804.

Bowen, William Living in town in 1831, when he bought #6 and 42. Sold them in 1834 to Thompson Clarke.

Brown, John Operated the ferry and the Castle Inn in Colchester in 1786. Had tavern license for 1787.

Brown, Rolly (Raleigh) Owned two acres adjacent to town in 1822. Tax list noted "residence unknown;" his heirs sold this parcel in 1848 to Potter.

Burwell, Robert A resident of Isle of Wight County, Burwell had been President of the Governor's Council in 1750. He bought #6 and 42 from Blackburn & Co. (creditors of Benjamin Grayson), and sold them to Ross in 1773.

Campbell, John Assistant to Alexander Henderson 1758-1761. He then went to Glassford & Co.'s store in Nottingham, Maryland, and by 1769 had returned to Glasgow as a merchant.

Carpenter, George Purchased #25, 27 and 39 in 1758. In 1760, he and his wife Ann sold #27 to Jacob Gardenshire and the other to Benjamin Grayson.

Chichester, Richard Bought #14 in 1796. His heirs paid taxes on the lot until 1855. Chichester had been a justice, sheriff and helped draw up the first census in 1782 for Fairfax County. His family did not live in Colchester.

Clarke, Thompson Obtained an ordinary license for 1817-1818 and 1821-1822. In 1829, bought #11 and rights to #2, 9 and 36 from Wagener heirs; in 1831 #38. In 1835, bought #6 and 42 from Bowen, thus holding all the waterfront lots in the center of town. Thompson died March 8, 1842, at the age of 51, leaving a widow, Bibyset. His tombstone at Lewis Chapel states that he was a member of the Baptist Church for 16 years. His heirs paid taxes on six lots until 1844. By 1854, they were owned by John Hughes.

Cloninger, Valentine In 1758, with wife Catherine purchased #14 and sold it the following year to Henderson. Cloninger lived in Prince William County and sometimes carted goods from Dumfries to Henderson's store.

Cochran, R. Mentioned April 1789, as being in Colchester, selling corduroy and thread.

Collins, James Resided in Alexandria, bought #40 in 1781, paid tax on it until 1803.
Referred to as innholder in Truro Parish in 1793.

Colquehoune, James Son of Agatha Fallin of Colchester. Inherited her two lots, paying tax on one 1787-1792 (perhaps #22). Sold to Jesse Williamson, but no deed is indexed. In 1819, a man of this name was a member of the Dumfries Fire Company.

Conner, Edward Resident of Loudoun County when he bought #5, 22, 24, 38, 40 from Trustees in 1759. Quickly sold all but #40, which his sisters Mary and Margaret sold in 1772 to Henry Moore. Edward ordered a wig from Glasgow in 1758 through Henderson. He was deceased by 1769.

Coulter, Peter Inspector at the tobacco warehouse c. 1799-1806, Coulter had operated a fishery at nearby Sandy Point in 1781. Bought #27, the tanyard lot, in 1792 from Downman, paying taxes on it sporadically until 1825. He and his wife Sarah had seven children, two of whom were John and Cordelia, Coulter's will was presented in January 1829. He left an 84 acre tract and 19 slaves. His wife was dead by 1836.

Courts, William Came to Mason Neck in 1767 from Charles County, Maryland. Purchased the Hallowing Point tract from William Bayly and operated a ferry across the Potomac. In 1769-1770, 1772 and 1773 had an ordinary license and before 1775 was running the Stone House tavern in Colchester. His wife Priscilla died in Maryland in 1815.

Cruse, Thomas In 1816, ran grocery store in Alexandria. In 1820, bought #19 from Lindsay, which had buildings valued at \$150. Paid tax 1824-1829, then sold to Beard. At that time lived in Baltimore.

Deane, Samuel Lived in Alexandria. Owned Bayly's 376 acres 1810-1813 before selling to Berry.

Donaldson, William Inspector of tobacco 1783-1788, flour inspector 1785. Deceased by August 1811.

Downman, William Son of Jabez Downman of Prince William County. Bought #27 in 1775, sold it in 1792 to Coulter. In 1805, advertised #6, 15 and 42, belonging to his wife Ann Bayly Downman. At that time they lived two miles from Colchester. The will of a William Downman was presented in January 1807, at the Prince William County court.

Dozer, James Ingoe Son of Leonard Dozer of Prince William. Presented to the Fairfax court in April 1761, for gambling on the Sabbath. Bought #22 in 1760 from Dr. Nesbitt. His ordinary license suspended in August 1763, for allowing unlawful gambling. He and his wife Martha sold lot to Cumberland Wilson by 1765.

Dunlap Paid tax on one lot 1796-1813 bought from Bayly. No deeds indexed.

Fallin, Elizabeth (Fallon, Fowler) Had an ordinary license in Colchester in 1759. First mentioned in Henderson's store account in December 1761, she frequently did needlework for him and made checked curtains for his quarters. Agatha Fallin in 1766 was doing his washing and mending; she had come to Colchester from Dumfries. Between 1778 and 1783 she bought an unidentified lot from Cleon Moore (possibly #22) which she left to her son, James Colquehoune, in 1792. Another deed (Fallin to Fallin) in the same missing deedbook may have been from Elizabeth, since Agatha paid tax on two lots 1782-1787. Agatha's will was probated in 1792.

Gardenshire, Jacob Came from Prince William County. In 1760, bought #27 and lived there some time before 1775, when he sold it to Downman.

Gibson, John Bought #12 from Ross in 1785. Paid tax on this and two others 1782-1798, on one lot until 1812. Gibson had formerly been a factor at Aquia for Oswald & Denniston before he replaced Ross at Colchester. By October 1776, he was in Colchester. Gibson served as vestryman in Truro Parish in 1774-1784, was Overseer of the Poor in 1785 and justice between 1783 and 1785. During the Revolution he furnished cloth for troops in 1776, became a Lt. Col. of the 4th Battalion in February 1777, and was offered the command of Col. Daniel Morgan's regiment. He may have been the John Gibson who was made Auditor-General in August 1778.

Gibson's store on Essex Street was advertised for rent in April 1784, and by October 1786, he had resigned as justice and returned to Prince William County. He lived at Prospect Hill near Dumfries until his death in 1807. Gibson was in partnership with Henderson and Fergusson, and left all of his lands to Fergusson.

Gray, Robinson Living in Port Royal, Virginia, in 1812 when he began paying tax on a Colchester lot. In 1816-1817, he had an ordinary license. Paid tax 1812-1816 and 1818-1829 on a lot which he held "by possession."

Halley, Henry Acquired all lands of the insolvent George Bayly in 1826. Halley died in 1838, leaving them to his son James. James sold four lots in Colchester and Bayly's ten acre reserve to Potter by 1855.

Harrison, Joseph Bought three acres on the waterfront from Weston in 1884, binding on the lands of Potter and Beach. Sold them to Beach in 1888.

Hattersley, Samuel Advertised as leather breeches maker in Colchester in 1800.

Heaton, John Living in Colchester January 1774. Occupied 12 acres along the dividing line between Bayly and Wagener at the corner of Ox Road and the road to Alexandria. Heaton built a dwelling, kitchen, store and salt house. This acreage had been mortgaged by Bayly to Heaton and may have been the 10½ acre reserve along the town line mentioned in early nineteenth century deeds.

Hedgman, John Bought #14 from Cleon Moore in 1782 and resold it immediately to William Thompson.

Hooe & Harrison Alexandria merchants who sold one-half acre adjacent to Colchester, formerly owned by John Mills, to Lund Washington & Co. in 1800. Hooe & Harrison had the lot from 1787. Huie & Reed ran a store on it in March 1786.

Hughes, John Licensed for an ordinary at his house in Colchester in February 1791. John Hughes, possibly this man's son, bought in 1851 (with John Raden) #19 and possibly others from Beard. By the 1854 tax list Hughes had possession of 13 lots. A note on the tax list for the following year indicates that he held these by "collateral inheritance," although no deeds are indexed. They seem to include #21,23 from Wagener's son-in-law Daniel Lee, lots #2, 9, 36, 6, 42 (formerly Thompson Clark's), and four other lots. Only #19 and #21-23 had buildings, valued at \$125 and \$75. Hughes was dead by April 1854.

In 1855, the holdings consisted of ten lots. His heir paid taxes on these until 1871. Seven lots were taxed from 1872 to 1878. George T. Hughes, his only son, sold three acres in 1900 to Hyde. The parcel was bounded on the southeast by Colchester Road.

Huskins, William No deeds are indexed, but tax lists show that Huskins and his wife Mary held the tanyard lot (probably #27) from 1796 to 1810. His will, presented in 1805, directed her to sell their house, lot and the tanyard. Huskins' sale account indicates that the lot was bought by Richard Simpson in 1806.

Lee, Daniel Married Mary Elizabeth Wagener after May 1825. From 1826, when her father's estate was divided, to 1835, the Lees paid tax on two Wagener lots (probably #21 and 23). In 1833, they were taxed on a lot on the north side of the Colchester Road. Daniel Lee was listed in the 1860 census as head of the household, but in an 1862 account the dwelling was referred to as "Mrs Lee's." They lived outside of the town limits.

Lee, Francis Lightfoot Member of the Continental Congress 1775-1779 and a signer of the Declaration of Independence, Lee lived in Richmond County. In 1787, he bought #5 and 13 from Cleon Moore. A kinsman, Ludwell Lee of Loudoun County, paid tax on these until 1869, when they were sold to John Powell.

Leslie, Dr. George Lived in Colchester in 1796 when he bought #30 from Thompson. In 1801-1803, bought land from Samuel Bayly, recorded in a missing deedbook. Leslie's will, presented in September 1806, left houses and lots to his wife Margaret. Four acres in the town were later inherited by their daughter Maria and sold by her in 1820 to Mary Berry.

Lindsay, William In 1766, a joiner (carpenter) in Colchester in Henderson's account-book, and mended five chairs for him in 1769. Had tavern license in 1785 and 1791 in the town. In 1811, a William Lindsay (son of Opie Lindsay and grandson of Robert Lindsay) bought #19 from Thompson's estate. In 1817, buildings on this lot were valued at \$150. In 1820, he sold the lot to Thomas Cruse. Lindsay had a tavern license in 1821-1822. He was constable for the district in 1825.

Linton, William Had tavern license in 1761 and 1763. Linton within the next two years bought property from Travers Waugh, who at that time owned the lower half of the original 1,000 acre patent. Before 1766, Linton rented #23 (and perhaps 25 and 39) from Grayson. These lots at the crossroads were known as "Linton's Enclosure."

From 1765 to 1770 he was a vestryman of Truro Parish.

McIntosh, John Bought #20 in 1758 and died in Colchester in 1769. A tailor, he made suits for Henderson and his servants. He and his wife Elizabeth had six children. Their son Lachlan inherited the "houses and lots" in the town; sons John and Thomas were left 193 acres nearby. A deed to Samuel Bayly (in missing 1778-1783 deedbook) may have been for #20.

McPherson, William Had a store near the gate of the town, according to the 1793 will of Peter Wagener.

Mason family In 1726, bought the upper half of the original patent, but because of a faulty title lost it to the Wageners. In a 1788 agreement, Wagener relinquished all claim on #2, the ferry landing, to Mason. A note on the tax list of 1813 stated that 3/4 of an acre in the town claimed by the Mason family had never appeared on the tax list and was therefore forfeit. This may have been #2, or else #1 and 36, which together totaled 3/4 of an acre.

Millan, William Had tavern license in 1809, when he opened a "House of Entertainment" at the ferry. His heirs paid tax from 1814 to 1816 on one lot near town.

Mills, John An Alexandria merchant, Mills was in 1775 living on one-half acre adjacent to the town of Colchester. His wife Susannah had died the year before at the age of 39. Her tombstone, now at Pohick Church, says that "she liv'd approv'd, died lament'd and belov'd." He had on his lot "a commodious house containing a large front store, counting and lodging rooms" and other outhouses. Mills seems to have been living in Alexandria by 1779 when he signed a petition of

merchants. At the time of his death in 1784 he lived at Shuter's Hill, (now the location of the George Washington Masonic Memorial) in Alexandria. His executors sold the Colchester lot to Hooe & Harrison; it had previously been occupied by the firm of Huie & Reed. Mill's obituary appeared in the first issue of the Virginia Journal and Alexandria Advertiser:

On 24 December last departed this life at Shuters Hill, Mr. John Mills, late of this town, merchant, in the 44th year of his age, of an Epilptic Fit, being the third attack he had suffered within the last six months. His probity and ability as a merchant, the elegance of his taste and manner and his obliging deportment deservedly procured him a large share of respect and regard...was buried on the 26th...at Shuters Hill, under the direction of a few of his friends as he left no relations in this country.

Moore, Henry In 1767, Moore came to Colchester from Frederick County and bought #14 from Alexander Henderson, who boarded with him for two years. Moore had four daughters and two sons. He bought, about 1772, #22, 24 and 40 for his sons Cato and Cleon. This was shortly before his death.

Cleon (1749-1815) fought in the Revolution and was wounded at the battle of Brandywine. He wrote "Washington's March." In 1781, he bought #5 from Henderson and in 1784 bought part of #13. Between 1778-1783 he purchased an unknown piece of land from Henderson. Cleon Moore was an attorney, licensed to practice in Fairfax County in 1772, and acted as county prosecutor 1783-1787.

In 1786, he moved to Alexandria, where by 1793 he was a notary public. Moore served as Captain in the Fairfax County Militia in 1787. In 1801, after Alexandria became part of the District of Columbia, he was a justice and also registrar of wills. He was an active Mason. Moore died in 1815; his wife Margaret in 1834. Their son, Cleon, died at the age of 16 in Curacao in 1807.

Morgan, Thomas Postmaster from 1813 to October 1815, when post office closed. Married Sarah Bates of Lebanon in June 1815. Not on Colchester tax list and probably lived outside the town.

Nesbitt, Dr. James (Nisbett) Bought #22 in 1759 and sold it in 1760. Lived in Prince William County 1772 and probably never resided in Colchester.

Norris, W. Taxed for one lot in 1799 and 1804, which he bought from the sheriff, probably for lapsed taxes (deedbook missing).

Parsons, Thomas Bought #22 in 1808, sold it about 1818 to Berry (deedbook missing). Taxed on one lot in 1809 and 1817. Valuation of \$130 added to the lot for buildings in 1817; his residence listed as Washington. Licensed in Fairfax County for an ordinary 1818-1820.

Pearce, Alexander Lived in Alexandria December 1780, when he bought #40 from Moore. In March 1781, he gave his wife Margaret a power of attorney when he was leaving for Europe. Pearce referred to himself as "shopkeeper" of Colchester in this document. A month later he sold the lot to Collins and stated that he was "late of Colchester."

Peers, Valentine Tobacco merchant in partnership with his brother Nicholas. Opened a store in the town in 1784. Made a trip to Europe in 1787. He was a Captain in the marines in the first part of the Revolution, resigning before December 1776. Peers came to Loudoun County from Great Britain in 1771 and was a brigade-major at Brandywine under General Weedon in 1777. He was living in Alexandria before November 1784, later moving to Charles County, Maryland. He also lived in Prince William County, Virginia, before moving to Kentucky in 1803.

Peill, Phillip In 1759, bought #12 from Trustees. A merchant, he rented a storehouse on #19 and a landing house on #6 from Grayson in 1762. While he was in Colchester he purchased a pair of spectacles from Henderson. Peill sold #12 in 1763.

Petty, Jane (Pettit) Bought #7 from Coulter in 1825, paying taxes until 1844. By 1854, she sold this, the former tanyard lot, to Potter. Mrs. Petty was a sister of Joshua Weston and was included in the 1820 Colchester census as having in her household one male under age ten, three under 16 and two females under 45. One person was engaged in farming.

Potter, William Taxed in 1812 for one lot; in 1817 the valuation for buildings was \$450. From 1819 to 1829 he paid tax on two additional lots. The 1820 census gives his age as over 45. He was then engaged in commerce and manufacturing, and owned one female slave.

In 1833, James Potter, whose relationship to William, if any, is not known, acquired two lots from Wheeler on which there were buildings worth \$90. In 1840, he bought one acre adjacent to the town from Cruse. By 1841, he was paying taxes on the 376 acres previously owned by Berry (the lower half of Bourne's Patent).

In 1848, the first Colchester deed of Potter's appeared in the index to deeds. At that time he bought two acres formerly belonging to Raleigh Brown's heirs and sold for taxes. These were bounded by Ox Road on the west and Colchester Road on the south.

In 1849, with Allison, Potter received title to Berry's 376 acre tract (minus certain reserves); the family burial ground, and two lots in the town, were not included. In 1852, he bought $10\frac{1}{2}$ acres in a strip along the town line and also four town lots once owned by Bayly. The "large lot" which included #27 was purchased in 1854 from Jane Petty. On the 1855 tax list he had nine lots. Two, formerly owned by Wheeler and Berry, had buildings.

In 1862, a skirmish took place around his house and Potter was arrested by Union troops. He died in November 1865, leaving two to three hundred acres to his sons Cornelius and Joseph. Their mother, Barbara Beach, continued to live in Potter's house. In 1866, she took 130 barrels of corn, 200 bushels of oats and 90 bushels of potatoes from the farm. Her sons lost no time in suing her. Cornelius served in the 5th Virginia Cavalry during the Civil War. A daughter, Hannah, received 65 acres after her mother's death. She was the wife of James Clarke and had seven children. Sued for nonsupport, Clarke threatened to pour coal oil on his wife and set her afire.

The Potters' town lots were forfeited in 1866 for nonpayment of taxes but transferred back to Joseph and Cornelius in 1869. They paid taxes through 1878 as Joseph and Cornelius Beach. (In 1961, a court decreed that these men, known by both names, were sons of James Potter.)

By 1883, Joseph, the surviving brother, sold his west half of the 376 acre tract and the former town lots, by this time known as Colchester Farm. It was resold in 1890 to John Downey.

Pound, Morris Bought #18 and 26 from Trustees in 1758. According to George Mason, he had a vineyard and proposed to start a winery. The street fronting these lots was called Wine Street. Pound's deed to Grayson is on a missing page in deed-book D, but in 1762 the town Trustees conveyed #18 to Grayson. After Grayson's bankruptcy in 1766 no deeds have been found relating to these lots, although from 1782 to 1799 Pound and later his heirs paid taxes for two lots. Pound was a German and had a son, Jacob, with him in Colchester in 1761.

Powell, John In 1869, bought #5 and 13, formerly owned by Ludwell Lee, also one (perhaps #19) listed as having belonged to Thomas Beard.

Reintzell, Jacob A tanner in Colchester in 1785-1786. He is not in the deedbook index.

Simpson, Richard Paid tax 1811-1816 on the tanyard lot. His inventory, made after his death in 1820, lists 31 sides of horse, sheep and kidskin. Most of his personal property was purchased by Ann Simpson.

Sprigg, Edward Living on #24 about 1772, Sprigg was an agent (factor) for the firm of Barnes & Ridgate, of Charles County, Maryland.

Templeman, William Lived in Fredericksburg. Briefly owned #24 before selling it to Henry Moore before 1772. No deed indexed but referred to in a later deed.

Trice, Richard Listed in 1820 census of Colchester but not on town tax list. Probably lived in immediate neighborhood. One person in his household was engaged in manufacturing.

Tyler, Charles In 1763, bought #12. Then living in Prince William County. Sold to Ross in 1772. Tyler was in Colchester in 1759 managing the tavern which belonged to Peter Wagener. He had an ordinary license in 1757, 1760 and 1761. In 1765, Charles Tyler was the county sheriff. He died in 1768 leaving a widow, Ann.

In 1775, a Charles Tyler, perhaps his son, moved from the town of Aquia to Colchester to run the Stone House Tavern owned by Peter Wagener.

In 1797 and 1798, he paid tax on one lot, not identified. By 1803, he was living in Centreville. Tyler died in Prince William County in 1815, aged 64. His obituary stated that he had fought in the American Revolution.

Ward, Enoch Inspector of the Colchester warehouse c. 1794-1805.

Ward, William A postrider in 1777, according to the Calendar of Maryland State Papers, Ward by 1787 had a tavern in Alexandria at Princess and Union Streets. In June 1792, he moved to Colchester to run the tavern "at the waterside."

Ward, Zachariah A son of John and Mary Ward, he was a brother of Enoch. Acted as postmaster from 1794 to 1804. In 1800, operated the tavern on lots #19-21-23, owned by Thompson's widow.

In 1804, he opened a tavern in Woodbridge moving by 1816 to the Occoquan Hotel. He next went two miles south of that town on Telegraph Road, where he died in 1822, having "made a fortune in taverns." Ward died at 61 years of age.

Washington, Lund This nephew of Lund Washington of Hayfield was a Colchester merchant, operating as Lund Washington & Co. in 1787 and 1790, then going into partnership with Sam Bayly. In 1795, the partnership was dissolved and his firm resumed its original name. In 1800-1801, he bought the lot adjacent to town formerly owned by John Mills. Washington married Susannah, daughter to Spence Grayson, on February 11, 1798.

Welles, Cornelius Paid tax on unidentified lot 1813-1818, with \$230 added to the valuation for buildings. In 1819, the lot went to Berry. Welles had an ordinary license in 1791 at his house in Colchester. He also had licenses 1814-1818. In February 1818, he was living at Chantilly (in the present Lorton area).

Welles died in February 1860, aged 96. According to a later reminiscence, he had been apprenticed as a boy on a ship which sailed from Glasgow, Scotland to Dumfries, Virginia. He also served in the American Revolution.

Weston, Lewis Born in Fairfax County in 1807, he bought #15 in 1831. The valuation for buildings was \$250 in 1832. In 1835, he bought an unidentified lot with structures worth \$240. Five more lots were purchased by 1855. Weston also owned 15 acres on the present Furnace Road by 1844, and a 100 acre tract on Giles Run. Taxes were paid on seven lots through 1878. John, one of the five children of Lewis Weston, married Amanda Beach of Washington, daughter of Levi Beach. She was not related to the present Beach family in Colchester.

After his death about 1865, this son John acquired from the other heirs two houses and seven lots. In 1886, John Weston bought from the Wagener heirs 17 acres between Colchester Road and the railroad, which may have included some town lots.

In 1881, he got from the Allison heirs 139 acres south of Colchester Road, which was the southeast quarter of the original patent. The Harbor View subdivision is on this tract.

John Weston died by February 1901, leaving his estate to Amanda. Her foster-daughter was the wife of the present owner of #15, Elmer Metzger.

Wheeler, Thomas In 1811, acquired two lots from the heirs of William Thompson, upon which he paid taxes until 1833. \$90 of the valuation was for buildings. In 1834, these were acquired by Potter.

Wheeler had a ordinary license in 1813 and in 1822-1823. In 1822 and 1823, he was a constable of Fairfax County.

Williamson, Jesse Taxed for one lot (perhaps #22) from 1794 to 1805, purchased from Colquehoune. His will, probated in 1800, left his estate to his wife Nancy. His goods included coopers' tools and a field bedstead. Nancy married Thomas Barrett by 1803, and sold her dower rights to the lot in 1805 to Barker.

Wilson, Cumberland A merchant in Dumfries, he owned #22 from 1764 to 1772. In 1774, he was on the Committee of Safety in Prince William County.

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